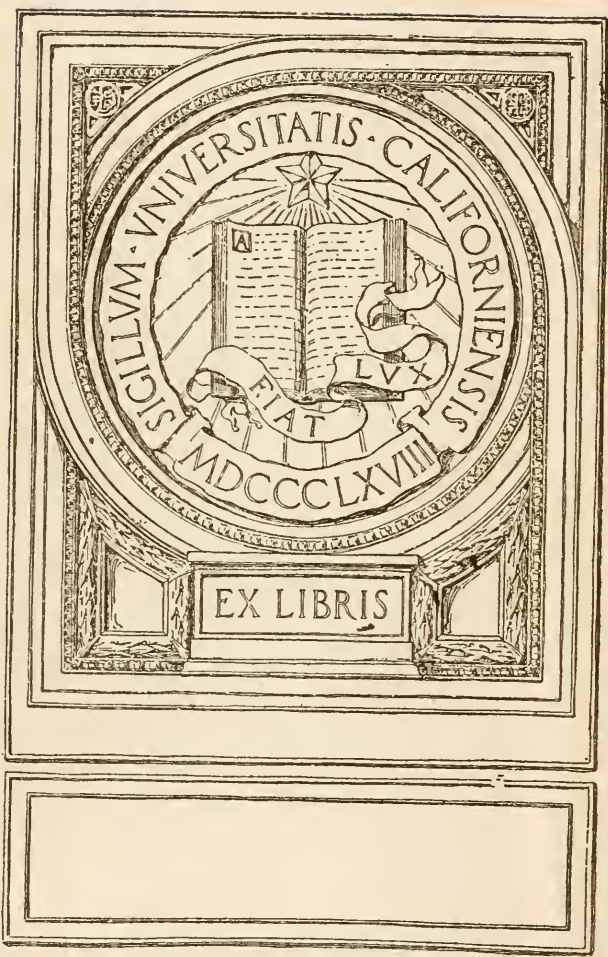


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# EMARKS ON THE FABLE OF THE BEES,

BY WILLIAM LAW, M.A.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
AUTHOR OF "A SERIOUS CALL," &c. &c.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY THE REV. F. D. MAURICE, M.A.

CHAPLAIN OF GUY'S HOSPITAL, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
AND MODERN HISTORY IN KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON, AND  
AUTHOR OF "THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST," &c. &c.

WITH AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING  
THE POEM OF THE FABLE OF THE BEES,  
MANDEVILLE'S INTRODUCTION AND TREATISE  
ON THE ORIGIN OF MORALITY.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THIS little book is published in compliance with the wishes of one whose memory is very dear to many, my friend and brother-in-law, the Rev. John Sterling. In a letter written last summer he expressed himself as follows.

“I cannot refrain from sending you a few words to announce a discovery which I made yesterday afternoon. Looking by accident into William Law’s works, I found, at the beginning of the second Volume, an answer to Mandeville’s Fable of the Bees. The first section is one of the most remarkable philosophical Essays I have ever seen in English. You probably know him, as perhaps the most perfect of controversial writers, whether right or wrong in his argument. Now this section has all the highest beauty of his polemical compositions and a weight of pithy right reason, such as fills one’s heart with joy. Perhaps you know the Tract already. For myself, I have never seen, in our language, the elementary grounds of a rational ideal philosophy, as opposed to empiricism, stated

with nearly the same clearness, simplicity, and force. If you have not seen it, I think I can answer for the pleasure it will give you; and it seems to me that, conversing as you do with young men, you could have many opportunities of recommending it where it would be sure to do good." He then speaks of his wish that it should be reprinted, adding "the later sections are of inferior interest and value, though marked with the same ability."

In a subsequent letter, he says: "It gives me great pleasure to know that you agree with me as to the merit of that Essay of Law's. I also am quite of your opinion on the unfortunate intertangling of the polemics and the principles, and felt it strongly in reading the work, admirable as the cleverness of the disputation is. As to the republication, my opinion is worth nothing; but I suppose you might write to —— and ask him to read the book, and say whether he thinks anything could be done."

In the same letter he suggests that a volume might be made out of Law, something similar to "Coleridge's Aids to Reflection," meaning, I suppose, that passages might be made the texts for comments, as passages

from Leighton and other writers are by Coleridge; the object being to trace the outlines of a moral science. Bodily weakness made him unequal to such a task: on other grounds I felt myself equally incompetent to undertake it. Indeed, the remark of a friend, that Law is the most *continuous* writer in our language, each of his sentences and paragraphs leading on naturally, and as it were necessarily to that which follows, makes me doubt whether the experiment of reducing one of his books into aphorisms, could be successful in any hands.

It was agreed, however, if the book were republished, that I should write an Introduction, for the purpose of explaining wherein I conceived its special worth consisted, and how far it was applicable to our circumstances. This Introduction, though written in the lifetime of my brother-in-law, he never saw. Believing that his admiration of Law arose from the delight which he felt in meeting with a thoroughly devout man, who recognized moral principles as involved in our human constitution, and who boldly appealed to the Conscience and Reason of mankind as witnesses for them, I have made it my chief object to defend this course as

honest, religious and safe. But I have expressed my own convictions in my own way ; if he were considered responsible for them it would greatly disturb my gratification in being permitted for the last time to be connected in any earthly work with one from whom I have received more benefits, and to whom I owe more love than any words can express.

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The poem of *The Fable of the Bees*, and so much of Mandeville's exposition of it as seemed necessary to make Law's "Remarks" intelligible, will be found in the Appendix, p. 101.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE Fable of the Bees, or "Private Vices Public Benefits," was first published in a complete form in the year 1714. The author, Bernard Mandeville, a physician, had already written a Satire upon the members of his own profession, but he seems not to have attracted much notice till he announced himself as a moral and political theorist. In that character he speedily received all the honours he could have desired. The strange title of his book was found faithfully to represent its contents; he had to all appearance arrived at a serious conviction, that what are called vices, are as necessary to the existence of society as what are called virtues; the opinion which he had formed he had courage to assert and ability to defend; many must have become openly or covertly its supporters; it was arraigned in numerous pamphlets and grave discourses; such men as Hutcheson and Berkeley thought that it needed a solemn refutation; the grand jury of the County of Middlesex presented the book in which it was put forth, as one which was dangerous to Religion and Order.

How, it may be asked, can a childish paradox have deserved such treatment as this? No one who has read Mandeville's work will be at a loss for a reply. Let a paradox, which is merely the fancy of an individual mind, be defended by the cleverest arguments in the world, and you may safely leave it to be confuted by the common sense, the indifference, the *vis inertiae*, of those to whom it is presented. But if it be nothing else than the setting forth in a clear definite proposition of a notion upon which men have been acting, different applications of which have been sanctioned by the practice and the apologies of moralists, statesmen, and divines, the case is greatly changed. There is a state of mind to be met with, in young men especially, which refuses to shrink from the explicit statement of a creed which has been received implicitly, and which it seems that other men would confess if they had only more of logical consistency or practical courage. There is a state of mind, far less honest than this, which disposes men to look upon words as having no connexion with realities, and therefore to utter carelessly and fearlessly whatever notions may present themselves to them as possible or as amusing. Sober people, who in the midst of habitual worldliness retain something of real reverence for opinions

which they have inherited, and a great dislike to be reminded of their own inconsistencies, are scandalised by the discourses which they hear from both these classes, and long for some summary method of silencing them. Their zeal is encouraged by politicians, who grieve that their secret of ruling the world should be divulged to the vulgar. Earnest men who might have regarded the popular heresy as a boyish freak to frighten aged women, perceive that it is in fact a *reductio ad absurdum* of many prevalent practices and dogmas, and welcome the opportunity of reasserting the principles with which these practices and dogmas are at strife.

These considerations are, I think, quite sufficient to account for the importance which was attached to Mandeville's work by his contemporaries. He brought the great question, whether the words "right" and "wrong" mean anything, to an issue. Those who had a trembling suspicion that no answer could be given to it, wished that it had never been raised. Those who believed that there was infinite danger in confusion of mind upon such a subject, no danger in the subject itself, were ready at once to declare the reason of their faith.

But they were not equally successful. Who would not have expected from such a man

as Berkeley, the noblest and most courageous assertion of moral principles, an encounter with the sophist upon the main issue, with a comparative indifference to the accidents or accessories of his arguments? How painful it is to find him, in his *Minute Philosopher*, abandoning the high ground, and condescending to discuss the important question, whether on the whole, more malt would be brought into the market to answer the demands of drunken or of sober men<sup>1</sup>. But alas! this admirable sage had been tempted, in his previous dialogue, into a still graver sin, of which this was the inevitable consequence. He had permitted the worthy farmer, Euphranor, to contend that the interests of society must be injured by the publication of Alciphron's doctrines, and that this was a higher consideration than their truth or their falsehood. He had left it to the atheist to assert the godly doctrine, that truth is above all things, and is, at all hazards, to be spoken.

On quite different grounds Mandeville was encountered by William Law. Most English readers are familiar with his name. If they belong to the religious world, they will have read

<sup>1</sup> See *Minute Philosopher*, Dialogues 1 and 2. It is one of the inconveniences of Berkeley's Dialogues that so many persons of different philosophical views are brought together under a common name. *Lysicles* is the representative of Mandeville's opinions.

his Serious Call: if they are zealous about ecclesiastical doctrines, they will probably have looked at his pamphlets upon the Bangor Controversy; a few may have been tempted by curiosity, or some higher motive, to study the mystical writings of his later years. His most popular work bears abundant witness to the clearness and manliness of his English style, and to his humorous perception of character. His argument with Bishop Hoadley shews that he had the powers and temptations of a singularly able controversialist. His Spirit of Love, and his Treatise on Christian Perfection, are at least proofs that he did not seek for popular reputation, and that he set before himself an object, in the pursuit of which all his characteristic infirmities were likely to manifest themselves, and would make him feel continual need of help from above to resist them. The struggle to overcome the bitterness of a polemic, without sacrificing his zeal for truth, must have been severe, and may not always have been successful. Yet of all the persons whom he must have irritated, Freethinkers, Methodists, Actors, Hanoverians—of all the nonjuring friends, whom he alienated by his quietism, no one, so far as I know, ever expressed a doubt of his sincerity and singleness of purpose. An ample testimony to those qualities is borne by Gibbon, who knew the reputation which he had enjoyed among



persons who saw him in the trying position of a domestic chaplain<sup>1</sup>. A suspicion therefore in which Mr Alexander Knox permitted himself to indulge respecting Law, must be pronounced uncharitable and unwarrantable<sup>2</sup>.

The book, which is here submitted to the reader, belongs to a stage of his life, long previous to his acquaintance with the German Theosophist. It exhibits all his wonted dialectical skill, and is full of ingenious and sagacious retorts upon his opponent. The former merit I should have considered a very insufficient reason for republishing the book; the latter a positive reason against it. We do not particularly want to hear Mandeville's arguments refuted, seeing that we probably have little familiarity with them. We cannot have the slightest pleasure in hearing him abused, seeing that upon the whole he may have done more good, by bringing forth falsehood openly and nakedly, than harm by the ingenuity with which he defends it. But Law's book has qualities of a far more enduring kind; qualities

<sup>1</sup> "In our family he had left the reputation of a worthy and pious man, who believed all that he professed, and practised all that he enjoined." *Memoirs of my Life and Writings*, p. 21. Gibbon also expresses high respect for Law as a wit and a scholar.

<sup>2</sup> See Knox's *Remains*, Vol. I., Letter to Parken on Mysticism.

which entitle it, especially the two first sections of it, to a very high rank among works on Moral Science. For the clearness of his expositions we may tolerate his skilful satire, since it would be a vain attempt to separate the polemical part of the treatise from the didactic. No book which has any life in it, can be safely torn apart from the occasion which called it forth; to reduce it into a set of dry theorems and demonstrations, is to destroy its meaning. And although Mandeville's work may not be much read in our day, I fancy that we are sufficiently acquainted with some of his maxims and some of the current answers to them, to be in a condition for estimating the worth of a reply, which strikes at the root of the sophism, instead of merely plucking off a few of the leaves which grow upon it.

When a person, who aims at the reputation of being profound, endeavours to prove that the acts, feelings, habits, which are described by the titles, good or virtuous, may be resolved at last into those which are called mean, or paltry, or base: how often have we heard the answer, "But what necessity is there for this rigid analysis? What is gained by it? Men do not consciously act upon these low impulses. They seem to themselves kindly, generous, benevolent. And while this is the case, may not we say that to all intents and purposes

they are so? Why tell them that in all their acts and thoughts they are but seeking their own interest? Of course you make them angry. They think you are unjust; for till you reveal the fact to them, it was to them no fact at all. And besides provoking them, you make them actually the bad men you affirmed them to be. Do not probe sores which nature has delicately and graciously plastered over, and which without your troublesome interference might never offend either the patient or the by-standers.”

To this reasoning Mandeville would have replied: “You do in fact concede to me all that I have asked for. I never said more than you have said, namely, that human existence is an useful and excellent compound of the most vulgar ingredients. I did not disturb the compound. I heard people complaining very angrily when some of the degrading elements came to light, and wishing to cast them out. I warned them to beware of doing so. I besought them not to meddle with these parts of the mass, lest the whole should fall to pieces. How unreasonable and ungrateful you are, to tell me, I have pushed my inquiries too far. You would not suffer people to be quiet in their ignorance of their own state. I told them what it was, because in their understanding it lay the only remaining chance of peace.”



Another class of persons take up the matter quite differently. They say: "High conceptions of beauty and excellence, it is true, do not belong to the world at large. They are the special characteristics of the great, the wise, the noble. But it is by following these conceptions, these dreams, if you will call them so, that they become better than their brethren. And their superiority sheds a light upon the whole species. To them the herd of men owe most of the advantages which they enjoy. See what you are doing when you take these thoughts away from us; when you make the rules and maxims of the multitude the measures and standards of all. You do not leave men even their common good things, their loaves and fishes. The greater men have conferred these upon them, and by the help of those conceptions which you suppose proceed from the same root as the meanest thoughts of the meanest men."

"I never denied," our doctor would have rejoined, "the advantage of these high notions, and of a class which should cultivate them. I have admitted expressly that society has need of a head of gold, as well as of feet of clay. And moreover, I see the advantage of persuading men, that the gold is intrinsically better than the clay. But the question stands thus: The clay, you admit, is the ordinary substance of humanity; the gold is something

extra-human ; you only trace veins of it in certain exalted personages. Now, if I maintain that all men are made of the same lump, my opinion is at least as reasonable and even as orthodox as the opposite one. And supposing I do maintain that to be the case, I am bound to suppose that the gold, by some process or other, must have been wrought out of the clay. The nature of the process I have endeavoured to explain in my book. I have shewn how possible it is to get a conceit of the superiority of self-restraint to self-indulgence, of generosity to meanness, of honesty to baseness, propagated among men ; and how much good flows from that conceit. There is no dispute between us as to the value of fine thoughts where they exist, but only as to the way in which they are generated, and their relation to other parts of the scheme."

Again, by a party most unlike the one just alluded to, it is often said : " We acknowledge that human nature is what you describe it to be, selfish in its root, and utterly corrupt in all its branches. The belief in this corruption, and in its universality, is the starting-point of religious faith. But the redeemed and regenerate man is raised out of the corrupt state which is proper to humanity ; to him your descriptions of mankind in the gross do not belong."

To these statements also the reply is given already in the Fable of the Bees. "I grant your exception," says Mandeville. "To Jews and Christians, as such, that is, to them in so far as they are out of the condition of ordinary human beings, my remarks do not apply. Those who are in some other state than my own, are beyond the reach of my criticism. I merely speak of man as man. I merely say what are the necessary conditions of society in his present position; for he must be regarded and governed according to the laws which we discover by observing his actual doings and feelings."

Now the reader, I think, will perceive that the argument of Law is different in kind from any of these. He does not complain of any analysis as too rigid; he does not cry quarter for Goodness. On the contrary, he demands a stricter investigation of all the facts to which Mandeville appeals. And he asks you whether this investigation does not prove that evil is not the substantial part of any act which is acted, or thought which is thought in the world; but, on the contrary, the destructive element of it, that which is making it unreal and false; and whether the attempt to shew that the real is the product of the unreal, that the true is got by the mixture of different counterfeits, is not the most monstrous of all possible insults to the reason of mankind. Assuming

this ground, Law cannot speak of those high conceptions of goodness and virtue to which the second class of Mandeville's opponents refer, precisely in their language. That he was not likely to undervalue such conceptions, his life and his books sufficiently testify. But according to the principle just laid down, nothing can be good, except so far as it is real. If these dreams be of something different from what man is, according to the will and purpose of his Creator, they must be bad dreams. And if they are dreams of the way in which any particular individual, or any class of individuals, may follow a different standard from the standard of humanity, and so may become isolated from their kind, they are bad dreams. To speak plainly, if they are to be worth anything, they must not be dreams at all; but sober, waking perceptions of that which is the true state of man, and of the methods whereby the life of the perceiver may be brought into conformity with it.

These conclusions of course would have been set at nought, if Law had permitted himself to speak of human depravity in those terms which were common among the religious writers of his day, and are still more common in ours. There was nothing, in his view, which could lead him to underrate the amount and aggravation of this depravity, or to explain away the scriptural

history of its entrance into the world. But he was bound to maintain that transgression can never be a rule; that evil must always be anomalous; that sin can have no meaning in any human creature, if there be not a right state belonging to that creature, from which he is departing; and that this state, so implied in all human acts, must be the one which is meant for man—the proper human condition. All reproof and moral censure imply the existence of it; all restoration implies the existence of it. Deny that there is such a state belonging to any man, and you say in effect, that as to him, the words “*reproof*,” “*judgment*,” and “*restoration*,” are without meaning.

It is obvious that these conclusions do not form a system which Law is setting up in opposition to that of Mandeville. The question between them is not this:—Of two moral theories, which is the more probable one? but this: Is there anything certain, or, if certain, to be ascertained, in morals at all? In the natural world there is a method of arriving at what *is*. If you ask the things you see and handle what they mean, not contenting yourself with their first rude or incoherent reply, but tormenting them till they have manifestly told their secret, you feel that a truth has been made known to you upon which you may act. Is it altogether otherwise in the region of human thought and life? Are



we there merely in a world of opinions and notions? Law finds that the words which men speak, the deeds which they do, the judgments which they pronounce, are as much facts as any which can come under the notice of the physical philosopher. And he finds that if you do not satisfy yourself with the mere shadows which are cast from these words, and acts, and judgments, but resolutely insist upon their letting you know what is in them, they too will speak plainly and faithfully. For that human existence is not more a phantom and a trick, than the existence of the sun and stars; and that it is not denied to a man to find out the real ground of that which is nearest and dearest to him, any more than of that which is distant, and comparatively indifferent.

Experience, I think, has shewn that in all ages this is the method, and the only method, of dealing with sophistry. The Grand Jury of the county of Middlesex had, no doubt, a certain indefinite impression that religion and order are weak, delicate, sensitive plants, most necessary, however, to be preserved for their pleasant odours, or their culinary uses, demanding therefore the watchful eye of any functionaries who are bound by their office to protect the feeble. To some such apprehension as this, mingling with another, and much truer, sense of the weak hold which men in general have of

the principles that are most needful to their existence, nearly all such interferences, and the cry for them among religious men, may be traced. The conviction communicates itself to the more thoughtful and inquiring youths of the time. It is not their business, they think, to take care of a thing which cannot take care of itself; they want something to lean upon. 'How can these tender nurslings be what they want? Keep them as long as you will or can from the rude hoof of the multitude, but do not pretend to us that they were planted in the soil by any divine hand, or that they have any natural right there. We know what artificial aids are required to keep them from utterly perishing.' Morality doubtless comes forward less in *forma pauperis* when prescription and antiquity are claimed for the current maxims and theories respecting duty and obligation, right and wrong. But whether the effect of such appeals upon the class to which I have just alluded be more successful or salutary, is very doubtful. What do these words, 'duty' and 'obligation,' 'right' and 'wrong,' mean, if not the condemnation of some tendencies and habits which have been prevalent, and multiplying from generation to generation? 'Shew that these habits are not at the root of your current theories, and ancient maxims, before you allege their popularity or their age. But if you like to abide by your

theories, very well. You confess that you want them to help out facts; we want the facts to tell their own story.' Again, a person wishing to meet this last demand, may plunge at once into the whole mass of facts which the popular sophist of the day alleges; he may special plead the inferences from them; may even contend that facts enough have not been produced; that the induction should be larger; that perhaps in the mighty scheme of God's universe, there may be multitudes yet unknown to us which would affect the conclusion most seriously; that modesty, therefore, and present acquiescence in that which we have received, are most fitting in us. How such suggestions, or such a prospect, can have any result, except to bewilder the conscience—to make it utterly doubtful of all evidence—ready, therefore, to accept the conclusions of the evil reasoner, because it starts with his premises, I cannot conceive. Myriads of new observations may perhaps open upon us; but how stands it with those which we have made; if all these lead us further into chaos, what hope that a universe will emerge out of those which are reserved for our descendants, or that we shall be the better for it if it do? There is yet one argument more, which is sanctioned by very high authorities—in one passage of his writings, by the most remarkable ethical teacher of Law's day. It is the argu-



ment of Safety. ‘What peril *may* lie in one decision upon these points. And, that decision may be wrong. Is it not judicious even with a less apparent balance of probabilities in favour of the other, wherein lies no similar hazard, to embrace that?’ ‘And so then,’ the person addressed might answer, ‘you do not any longer appeal to truth and conscience, and such fine words. You practically confess that these mean very little. You wish me only to be cautious; to see that I do not fall into mischief. Thank you heartily! But have you really read the first fifty lines of Lucretius, without discovering that the very reward we propose to ourselves is the emancipation from those terrors by which you would hoodwink us, and hinder us from looking into the nature of things? I may run into this danger surely, but what if the promise of all the past discoveries I have made in the line you would keep me from, is, that I shall not? Is not your argument, being as it is, a check upon thought and discovery, a new motive to push on, that I may take all such alarming possibilities out of the way of myself and of future inquirers?’

All these methods, and many more, had proved utterly ineffectual with the Athenian youths in the days of Socrates. In proportion to the keenness of their intellects, to the vivacity of their characters, even strange as it

may seem, to their zeal for truth, was the danger to which they were exposed from Protagoras, Hippias and Prodicus. Unless they could meet with one more able to sympathise with their questioning spirit than these teachers, as willing as they to confront facts, as little caring to magnify opinions, of whatever date or prevalence, to the disparagement of them, the Greek Mandevilles must have gained a complete victory. The one competent assailant of them set himself to shew that those principles for which politicians trembled, lest the winds of heaven should visit their faces too roughly, were in fact the substance of their lives—those realities to lose which, in the strictest sense, is to lose one's self. Dogmas respecting these principles were entitled to reverent attention, but the moment they set themselves up as substitutes for the principles, they become dangerous—a mere paper-currency without any gold to answer it. Let the new teacher then bring forward his coin, he shall not be stopped from circulating it by being told that it is not of the realm; only let us see what it is, let us have the liberty of testing and weighing it also. Straightway some new and splendid theory is produced, with a great array of experiences. No objection is taken to the first, because it is not comprehensive enough; to the latter, because it might be extended further. Quite the contrary. There is one phrase in

the enunciation of that theory which has puzzled Socrates; he should like to investigate it carefully. That catalogue of important facts was too much for him, he is so slow in his memory and perceptions; if he might but search out the meaning of a particular fact which was reported, he should be much more competent to enter into the general inquiry. Then begin those wincings and wriggings of the hitherto triumphant teacher, longing to break loose from his moorings and float again into the open sea of generalities, enraged that his own consecrated instrument of language should be wrested from his hand and turned against him, which are described so livingly in the Platonic dialogues. But yet we feel that this object is entirely subordinate to a higher one: not the self-glorying sophist, but the confused, almost shipwrecked, but still earnest or half-earnest disciple, is ever present to the mind of the sage. The great object is to make him safe, not by telling him that in a matter of great moment he may trust himself to a shifting sand of probabilities, but by urging him not to rest till he has his feet upon the ground, and stands firmly on it. 'The universe seems to you a mere shadow-world, a collection of phantoms. Well! but what are you? You are not afraid to question notions, systems, traditions; be not afraid to ask yourself this question: Am I a phantom? Once

ask it boldly, meaning to get an answer, and you are beyond the sophist's circle ; his charms cannot reach you. For you must feel yourself to *be* something; and to be anything, you must have something to take hold of; and that something must *be* too. And so you find that there is a substance, and that it is near you; and all the argumentation in the world cannot destroy it, or your connexion with it.'

Vast as were the differences between Athens in the age of Pericles, and England in the reign of George the First, this method was as applicable to the one country and the one period as to the other. Centuries of accumulated experience had not made it less necessary that men should have a point of view from which they might contemplate their stores, a position in which they should not be crushed by them. To be born in an atmosphere of holier and purer traditions, was a reason for each man to enquire more diligently how they concerned him, what he himself was; neglecting that enquiry he forfeited the blessing, corrupted the traditions which should have been helps to save him from his natural idolatries, with those idolatries; made the truth which remained in them a witness against the want of any corresponding truth in himself. Nor could the higher gift of a revelation from heaven otherwise affect this duty, than by making it more

imperative, seeing that the very word *revelation* imports the making known that which is, to the persons who are the most interested in knowing it; and seeing that *this* revelation proclaimed itself to be a light to the feet and a lamp to the path: not professing to supply a set of portable rules or maxims, but offering to lead the humble disciple into the apprehension of the laws and mysteries under which he is himself living.

And the young men of Great Britain, with all their advantages, had as much need at this time to be preserved from utter scepticism respecting moral principles, as the far more lively and quick-thoughted Greek. Great part of the popular literature of the time, prose and poetical, was simply modal: the stage had established a formal code of libertinism; the statesmen had reduced political dishonesty to a system; the upper classes, having no great fear for the stability of property, could indulge themselves in the luxury of doubting whether there was stability in anything else. At such a time, serious men were driven to enquire what roots there were below the soil, of which those who turned up its surface so cleverly and industriously knew nothing. I am far from thinking that the professed moralists were the only persons who helped to obtain for this question a satisfactory answer. Some of the writers of



fiction, by shewing that there is another standard of life and character than mere decorum, and that every act presumes a person who does it, and who is himself worthy to be studied, as well as his acts, may have helped to cultivate a stronger and more healthful morality, even though they were stained by the unclean habits of the people with whom they conversed, and whom they described. Morality was, however, in a very strict and peculiar sense, the subject which, to good or bad effect, successfully or unsuccessfully, occupied all the men of this time. The most insignificant compositions of any age help to point out the direction of the most earnest and thoughtful. The second-rate literature of this time, including its pulpit discourses, consisted of laudations, most jejune and soporific, of the gracefulness, becomingness, and utility of virtue. We may be sure, then, that somewhere or other these conventional phrases and dreary commonplaces were questioned as to their meaning, and were actually translated into letters and life. But wherever this was the case, men who in their ordinary habits of thinking were the most removed from sympathy with Plato, fell into his method of examining the forms of expression and of thought which the sophist resorted to, for the purpose of shewing how necessarily the moral truths he denied were implied in them.

But the circumstances of the 19th century are very different from those of the 18th. We often fancy that we have more sympathy with the most remote ages than with our immediate predecessors. And the want of sympathy seems to be much in that point which has been just noticed. Moral questions in a naked form did directly interest the men of the last century, and do not at all in the same degree interest us. Such a change must indicate that the work which is appointed for us, is not precisely that which was appointed for them. No reasonable man can expect or wish that his contemporaries should listen to the confutation of doctrines which do not molest them, or should forsake the controversies with which they are busy. But he may feel, that each period performing its own task well contributes something to the next, and that, through want of that especial lore which those who have gone before possessed, we are likely to do our own work inefficiently and blunderingly. The reasons for this belief and this fear will be perhaps apparent, if we consider more exactly wherein the difference to which I have alluded consists.

I do not conceive that it can be expressed with any truth in this form, that moral studies were most pursued by the men of the last century—physical studies by us. Theirs was a time of great activity in physical research; the

most important scientific discoveries, as well as mechanical inventions, belong to it. No doubt the results of these discoveries and inventions have multiplied beyond all calculation; and this circumstance may be significant of the inward alteration which has taken place. Our fathers were more busy in observing the fixed laws of nature, and such of her living processes as cannot well be overlooked by one who takes note of her laws; we are much more anxious to obtain powers from her for our own use. The two purposes can never be wholly separated, but there may be clear indications which has the most tendency to exalt itself, or become exclusive, in any given time. Neither pursuit can of itself make men indifferent to those great questions concerning their own life which are ever thrusting themselves before us, and demanding some kind of settlement. But the direction which the thoughts of people follow in this department, will answer to the direction which they follow in the other. When the naturalist is consulting his mistress about the laws and principles by which she is governed, the moralist will desire to know what laws and principles govern the life of human and rational creatures. When the naturalist is most anxious concerning the application of the energies which he finds in the world around him, to the increase of our strength and convenience, the hu-



man student will be employing himself about the ways in which men act upon their fellow-creatures—about spiritual powers and influences generally—about the movements of society. Those admirable men amongst us who have devoted themselves to physiological or chemical investigations, appear fully to understand our position in reference to these, and the duties which it imposes upon them. They are not anxious to bring back a cold statical character into physics; they do not demand that science should retreat into corners, and disclaim a connexion with the common toils and occupations of men. But since the desire to turn natural agents to account must assuredly breed infinite quackeries, and probably some dark superstitions, they would lead men to see that the right employment of every such agent by us involves a solemn inquiry into the functions and energies which the Creator has assigned it. They would look upon every experiment as a devout prayer to Him, that he would reveal his own methods, that we may imitate them; and as they would complain of all check upon such experiments as contrary to his will, and a kind of denial of man's relation to him, so they would treat all dealing with physical powers and mysteries, which is not grounded upon such discoveries, or is not for the purpose of leading to some, as mischievous profaneness—a wrong to man, and an insult to God.

Such I believe to be the spirit which actuates our more eminent students in this region; and what seems of all things most desirable is, a like temper and a corresponding diligence in those who watch over still more sacred interests. In the sphere with which they concern themselves, there is no less imminent danger of quackeries and superstitions—of men proceeding without principles, and not seeking for any. There, too, we are hurried along, and more rapidly, by the necessity of practising with powers of the use and limits of which we comprehend but little. With fulminating balls and explosive steam, the most subtle electricity, the strangest magnetism, is every one conversant who lives with human beings—far more who teaches or rules them. Yet it may be hoped that these powers too are under some regulation; that here too there is some relation between motions and impulses, and that the impulses themselves can be traced to some origin. Men may be impatient of being stopped in their business with the question whether this is the case or no; they may tell you there was leisure for such thoughts in the past time, none now. But, unfortunately, they are stopped in their business without any such inquiries; they have most perplexing moments of leisure, which they do not owe to any troublesome moralist. In their driving, they come into contact with some ob-

stacle which will not let them advance ; a voice from the earth beneath, or else from the heaven above, says to them, You can go no further in this way. If these threatenings will not be disobeyed, is it of use to ask what they signify? If our movements are in danger of becoming mere gyrations, is it so great a check to them, that we should learn what is the condition of their being progressive? A glance at some of the subjects with which we most occupy ourselves at this time, either in the way of practice or of meditation, will shew, I think, that the help which we may gain from an 18th-century teacher, who was comparatively little versed in them, but who understood his own vocation well, is by no means to be slighted.

I. Questions concerning Virtue in the true Roman sense of the word, that is to say, concerning that which makes or constitutes a Man—concerning Duty and Obligation, concerning Right and Righteousness—are clearly distinguishable, and are always practically distinguished, from questions concerning the nature and limit of our Faculties—concerning the relation in which man stands to the sensible world, concerning his connexion with any world different from that. But these subjects must always connect themselves with each other; the chief difference in the treatment of them arising from the first or the last being regarded as principal or as subordinate.

There can be no doubt of the relation in which they stood to each other in the eighteenth century; though it was owing to the discussions which arose in that century that their position was changed. Hume, who like his contemporaries generally perhaps took more real interest in ethical questions than in all others, by raising the great controversy on the authority of experience, and the impossibility of referring to any higher one, compelled men's thoughts into a more purely metaphysical direction. For the greatest moral interests were at stake in this argument. If nothing be eternal, there can be no eternal right. It was this consideration, say some who are well competent to give an opinion, which urged Kant to enter upon his enquiry into the province of experience; and his delight in having ascertained, as he believed, the existence of a faculty which takes cognisance of principles, and does not merely observe successive facts, or draw inferences from them, was mainly excited by the conviction that he was discovering a firm basis for moral science. But his doctrine was sure to be recognised as important for its own sake, and not merely for this result. Those who believe that there is an organ in man for conversing with the infinite have been occupied with numberless controversies which that belief suggests; such as whether this organ do itself contain or originate

that which it perceives, or whether its existence implies something pre-existing, from which its light is derived : a most deep and solemn enquiry indeed, involving issues so important that they may well make all, even those concerning the nature and meaning of morality, seem insignificant. Those, on the other hand, who have rejected Kant's conclusion, have been endeavouring to make a theory of our faculties, without reference to it: to shew how it is possible, by certain modifications in the notion of experience, to avoid the startling inferences of Hume ; or how we may take his premises in their fullest extent, and yet ground some other conclusions upon them ; or how those conclusions may be defended ; or how others are involved in them which he did not develope.

Now I do not profess to enquire whether, in an encyclopedic view of the sciences, it be the more or less correct course to look upon Metaphysics as the genus of which Ethics are a species. But I cannot help thinking, that one who is studying primarily for the sake of his own life, will find it very advisable to enter upon the elder argument first, even if the ultimate object which he proposes to himself is to arrive at satisfaction upon that which is most popular in his day. It may be a great thing to know whether we have this or that power: whether we have merely eyes and ears, or some



gifts which are not contained in these. But it is surely a more serious thing to know that we *are* something, and what we are. To be or not to be, is after all the question which is set before us in our cradles, and goes along with us to our graves. To a man who has grappled with it, different hints and discoveries respecting his faculties will be much more intelligible. For one who knows that he is a responsible being will have found occasions of exercising his faculties before he has ascertained their precise nature or definition, and that exercise will have taught him more respecting them than all the speculations in the world. So by degrees he will learn to distinguish their kinds and objects; since clear conscious acts are always distinguishable; through them the habit of distinction is formed; premature efforts at classification stifle it. Nothing is sadder than to see a man fitting up shelves and dividing them by compartments, when he has nothing to put into them. He who has no deep necessity for converse with the Infinite, will never really believe that he has an organ for such converse, whatever he may pretend about it. He who has that necessity, will recognise the existence of this organ in some phrases or other. If his phrases are not good, he will improve them as fast as his faculties of perception grow, and he cannot with any advantage improve them



faster. Much debating then upon this matter seems to me unprofitable. Whoever confesses the existence of a higher spiritual organ has a right, I think, to ask his opponents not to assume *a priori* that nothing is true *a priori*—not, in their zeal for experience, to reject the aid of experiment. And on his side he is bound to concede that there is the same *prima facie* plausibility in the Locke notion of the intellectual universe, which there is in the Ptolemaic notion of the outward universe. If he ask more than this, or refuse this admission, he makes it evident that he has not faith in his own principle.

That other great question, about which those who believe in the existence of this organ are divided, whether it be the ground of truth, or only the mirror which reflects it—the light, or the eye which dwells in the light—will also be much more likely to find a satisfactory determination, if the question, whether there is a right and wrong, has been seriously considered first. For I do not think that any one has ever calmly meditated on the words, ‘Right,’ ‘Ought,’ ‘Obligation,’ without feeling that the first, as much as the last, implies the idea of reciprocal rule and subjection, of authority and obedience. It will be very hard to have admitted this reciprocity in the one region, without carrying it into the other; practically very

hard indeed, for a man who feels that he is obeying a law when he does right, to feel when he perceives a truth that he is the author of it. I do not say that in a system there is any necessary connexion between these two ideas; I am certain there is the most intimate connexion between them when a man is working to satisfy himself concerning the principles of his own life and being.

II. But I have no notion that questions of this kind will in this form have any interest for more than a very few of our countrymen; nor do I desire that they should. In another form they are continually thrusting themselves upon our notice, not in solemn academical discussions, but in books for schools, rewards for good boys, guides to mothers. Education may not be the business of this time more than of any other; but we more feel it to be our business, talk much more about it, devise many more schemes and instruments for carrying it on. In the invention and application of these, hosts of metaphysical theories are put forth; we find ourselves arrived, by a most sudden and unexpected route, at the conclusion of interminable controversies; the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, or the *Critique of the Pure Reason*, are taken for granted as a preparation for hints on English grammar, or lessons in three syllables. Nor have we any right to complain that these writers do

not wait a longer time to ascertain the grounds of the opinions which they assume; for children grow very fast; they must be taught in some way; and we know that they have been taught well by persons who are ignorant of all these discussions. That which we would crave of our doctors and doctresses in education is, not a more extensive but a slenderer, assortment of metaphysical phrases—a greater freedom of spirit to act and teach, without any reference to them. For if they had this freedom, if they did become as little children, that they might guide little children, they would contribute far more to our knowledge of the growth of the human spirit, of its acts and processes, of its needs and capacities, than they have ever yet received, or are likely to receive, from the professors in this department. But here lies the difficulty. To purge the eye of the teacher of its mists that it may not see falsely, to rid him of maxims and theories, which make his observations, and, what is more important, his doings, contradictory and insincere. Of these cloudy theories, the most mischievous, it seems to me, are those which confound the corruption which every day will bring to light in the child, with the child itself; as if the evil were its substance, instead of being its curse and its destruction. For this is an hypothesis which every new experience appears to confirm, and which

mixes itself in fearful complication with all exasperations, pettinesses, bitternesses, in the mind of the instructor. True, he denies his own hypothesis every time he speaks to his pupil as to a moral creature conscious of its own wrong; his vocation is a denial of it; yet it becomes more and more a habit of his mind, it begets in him more and more listlessness and despair, it is a root of infinite perplexities in his conduct, which reflect themselves too faithfully in the subject of his care. In very different measures does this opinion operate. It meets with some partially successful counteractions. The humble self-denying parent or schoolmaster learns to overcome it in practice, though the phrases which express it may still cleave to him; but that it is a serious hinderance to education, one which has affected us, and does affect us all in a thousand ways, those who have reflected most upon the history of their own lives, and have studied most affectionately the histories of other men, will, I suspect, be the least disposed to deny. A writer then, like Law, who lays the axe to the root of this falsehood, though he may have said nothing upon the subject of education, may remove one of the greatest obstructions to the right study and practice of it among us.

III. But here in England, questions of metaphysics, and even questions of education, are commonly absorbed into the one great study of

politics. Of this study it is evident that Law took little heed. Mandeville's Treatise was in the strictest sense a political one; the moral question was only introduced because it interfered with the settlement of his social scheme. His opponent reverses the relation of the two subjects. "Settle the interests of society as you can, these principles must be true;" this is the method of his answer. If what I have said about the vocation of his age be right, he shewed a sound discretion in reasoning the case upon this ground; Berkeley failed precisely because he deserted it. But I fancy that we should be very indiscreet if in a similar undertaking we followed his example. How the change has come to pass I do not enquire; but I am satisfied that any one calmly comparing the eighty years before the French revolution with the fifty years since, will feel that social questions force themselves upon the men of one period as they did not upon those of the other, and refuse to be postponed to any, however important, which merely concern individual men. If this be the case, it must be unsafe in our day to set up morality merely as a check upon the acts and plans of the politician. The maxim which Lord Ashley propounded in the last session of parliament, "Nothing which is morally wrong can be politically right," is of the greatest worth, and was especially gratifying in such a place,



from such a speaker ; but the experience of the past does not encourage us to hope much from it taken alone, or even from a line of conduct simply grounded upon it. The old Athenian notion of an Aristides as the needful balance to a Themistocles—of Justice hanging as a drag upon the wheels of Policy, was no doubt for a time useful to the protection of the national character. But a nation strong and growing feels that self-preservation, self-extension, is a duty ; not its lower instinct, but its higher conscience, testifies of it. The Greek feeling, “Man’s intelligence is meant to rule over animal force ; we are intended to govern the barbarians,” may have been mixed with all kinds of falsehood ; but it was not in itself false, it was the germ of deepest truth, the recognition of a divine and spiritual order in the universe. For morality to be regarded as something in deadly opposition to this internal conviction, wherein so much of the life and strength of the Athenian people lay, was surely most unfortunate ; all the unhappy results which followed might have been predicted from such a contradiction. When great wrongs had been perpetrated,—wrongs known and felt to be such,—there would arise a bewildered feeling that they were inevitable ; another law than the one which grave men talked about had already been recognised and acted upon ; that must henceforth be followed.



Sophists would soon arise to announce this law, to express it in clear and rigorous definition. "Might is right," would presently be felt to be the only true doctrine, the one which lay at the root of all state existence; circumstances might conceal it or modify it; but they were hypocrites who pretended that mankind could be governed by any other.

Now such a statement as this requires to be met directly, not indirectly. Unless you can shew that society itself has a foundation, that an eternal justice is implied in the existence of communion and government, you may keep your moral principles as pocket-treasures, you may be tolerated in the possession and occasional display of them; their application being only denied when any evil is to be committed on a great scale, or when wrong doing has established itself into a system. To this great argument therefore the Greek sage addressed himself. He felt that the work for which he lived was not half accomplished, unless he could shew that righteousness must lie at the root of a human commonwealth—must be the meaning and the substance of it—and that there must be a method of bringing into conformity with it the minds of those who are rulers or subjects. This seems to be the object of that work which has been wrongly supposed to be the sketch of an imaginary republic. Plato undoubtedly would

have denied it to be imaginary at all. He would have said, that it was the discovery, so far as his light enabled him, of the actual order of human society; that order which men's acts may contradict, but which the very contradictions help to manifest. And whatever opinion we may form as to the success of his investigation, some such investigation, aided by all the instruments which we possess for entering into the meaning of the facts amongst which we are living, must, I conceive, be the groundwork of a political science.

But the Republic of Plato is undoubtedly meant as the crowning work of a series. The method which is followed in it had previously been established by other and simpler experiments. We may then profit greatly in our political studies by a work like Law's, which exhibits this method in its elementary form, in reference to the first laws and principles of morality. The nature of this help will be more apparent if we consider that there are three forms of political opinion exactly answering to those which we have spoken of already, as pretending to be substitutes for Mandeville's moral creed, and as at last giving it a practical sanction.

The first of these political opinions is that of the CONSERVATIVE. Society according to him is a thing of most feeble and delicate structure, which any shock a little rougher than usual

may destroy utterly. To watch over it, to keep it by any means together, is the great business of the statesman. For this end he must resist every attempt at alteration which is suggested by some meditative man; only acknowledged abuses, that is to say, only those which have attracted the notice of the multitude, and have called forth a strong popular cry against them, are to be corrected—to be corrected not because they are abuses, but because they are acknowledged, and because the peril of parting with them appears, upon a refined calculation, to be less than the peril of preserving them. The measure of peril being the only measure of action, it becomes of course indifferent whether the thing denounced be an abuse or no; whatever is so considered by a sufficient number of strong people, is to be condemned; just as whatever is not so considered is to be upheld. These are the golden maxims of modern political wisdom, those which a vast majority of Englishmen in the upper classes receive as the guides of their thoughts and conduct.

The REFORMER, however, has courage to oppose them. To maintain the present order of society, can never, he thinks, be the aim of any great or even of any honest man. There is some model somewhere after which it ought to be fashioned anew. It may be found in some

past age, and then the question in which, begets various strifes and schisms; or it may be obtained by training men to some higher apprehension than they possess at present of what is noble and good; or it may be hoped for from a scheme which shall define with logical precision the motives and influences whereby men are ordinarily swayed—shall make them act as checks upon each other, and shall use them for the repression of crime, for the production of harmony.

No! answers the RELIGIOUS doctor; these schemes are mere dreams. In societies of men, such as you suppose, none of these reforms are possible. Your society is nothing but that world which the Bible declares to be lying in wickedness. True, there is a *divine society* established among men, but it consists of those who are excepted out of the mass. We belong to it by renouncing this world, and by proposing to ourselves a future one as the object of all our search and solicitude.

Now, while I admit the great truth which lies under each of these systems, I must contend that, as systems, they involve the grossest self-contradiction, and leave the field of politics as the rightful and exclusive possession of Mandeville and his school. Of all things, that which is most hateful to the Conservative is subjection to the opinion and will of the multitude; yet

who becomes so utterly a servant to the multitude as he? He denies that there is any gift of foresight in the statesman; till the crowd has spoken its word—has uttered its groan—his business is to hold his peace, and shut his eyes. Then what a Destructive he becomes, in virtue of this Conservative principle. The pain which causes the abuse to be acknowledged is intolerable; it must be redressed by an application to the spot at which it is felt. The head seems full to bursting—the patient cries out for the leech or the cupping-glass. The state doctor knows that it is not a case of fulness, but of exhaustion; depletion will at once weaken the constitution, and increase the disorder. Yet he must obey; this is the *acknowledged* abuse; with the unacknowledged derangement of stomach or liver, by the hypothesis, he has nothing to do. In his wisdom he avoids taking any step, till the only steps which he can take are such as lead, by a slower or a quicker process, to death.

Is the Reformer less at variance with himself? The whole system of society around him is corrupt and abominable—he stands aloof from it, and protests against it. All, he complains, is mere talk and profession—real doing he can find nowhere. “Alas!” he begins in time to think with himself, “and what am I doing? am not I talking and professing; objecting to



other men's labours—never putting my own hand to the plough; displaying a perfect platform of society—never taking any honest pains to set it up?" He changes his scheme, mixes with the actual affairs of the world, only for the purpose of bringing them to the state he longs for. But for this end he is reduced to the necessity of perpetual compromises; that he may at last have everything according to his model he must be content, in the mean time, almost to forget it: till by a necessary process he at last actually forgets it; the vision dies away, or fades into the light of common day; he falls into the routine of ordinary plotting and officiality.

Nor is it otherwise with the religious declaimer against human politics. He, too, finds that he must occupy himself with them, in order to fulfil the express commands of his Master; that he may, even in an ordinary way, do his duty to his neighbour. But how sadly confused his work is! What a sense of wrong doing accompanies every step of it! He is dealing with secular things, he calls them so, he believes them to be so. He knows, in some way or other, that his mind is becoming secularised—his conscience less and less clear. And what he is not conscious of is but too evidently the fact; he is colouring all his notions of the unseen world with the mists and fogs of this.



Now the practical statesman may incline to any one of these views, or he may mingle them altogether. It signifies little which course he takes; if there were nothing better in his heart than these systems would lead him to, he must adopt the maxim of the Fable of the Bees. He must say, 'However I may value high notions of morality myself, as a politician I have nothing to do with them. With religious influences I may have to do, because they may be useful as instruments to me, or dangerous as obstructions. But I must use them, just as I use every bad and low influence which acts upon men, and I must always be careful of their becoming too strong, too pure, lest they should overpower me; if I cannot secure that they shall be diluted with what is earthly and evil, I know that they will.'

It is not certainly to be assumed that one who has acquired the habit of looking at what is good as the substantial part of everything in the region of individual life, will be able at once to transfer that habit to social life; but at least he will find it a great shock to his mind to recognise any other as if it had a stronger stamp of morality and religion. If he has learnt that the disorder in his own mind and character is itself the witness to an order, he will not be easily persuaded that any amount of disorder,

in the relations of men to each other, can bear an opposite witness. If he be convinced that there is a permanent state of being, which he must call his, as much when he is most at variance with it as when he is most in accordance with it, he will not be affected by any one's telling him that there was a true state of society once, or that there may be a true state hereafter, but that now all is incoherency and corruption. He may hail with hearty joy all that he can find of purity and goodness in the past, he may feel infinite longings for the blessings he believes are reserved to man in the future ; but he can only understand that partial purity and goodness of the past, that perfect purity and goodness of the future, as the more distant or more exact accordance with the truth of things, the truth of which our consciences testify as living and present, which our words and acts intimate that we are professing to aim at, and need not war against. In this spirit the Jewish prophets of old spoke to their countrymen ; they felt indeed that the days on which they had fallen were days of grievous corruption—of corruption which nothing but a tremendous judgment, a day of the Lord, could purge away. But still they spoke of the order as being there ; the king, priest, prophet, were he ever so rebellious or false, had each

his vocation, and might fulfil it ; his position was not less desirable than that of his forefathers, only he had abused it more ; the effect of any change would be to unfold more thoroughly the meaning of the state in which they were then living, and to bring those who received the punishments rightly into practical submission to it. All sound Conservatism, all sound Reformation, seem to lie in this method ; Conservatism being the preservation of the true sense and meaning of the things which actually exist ; Reformation the separating of it from its counterfeits. And here, too, seems to lie the true religious view of the case, not in confounding what is most pure and holy with what is most base under certain large formulas about general corruption, but in shewing how the tendency to evil in man is manifested by his continually losing sight of realities, and substituting vain shows and mockeries for them.

The practical politician, who honestly takes this course, would certainly be obliged to abandon many of his current maxims ; he would not be able so easily to cast in his lot with any one party of the state and to adopt its theory of action ; he would not be able to get so much credit with moralists when he is out of office, for his bold denunciations of his opponent's system as utterly evil and abominable ; nor so much credit with easy men, when he is in office, for

his clever defences of any act or system, as the best under existing circumstances. He will feel that in each measure and system there is likely to be a true meaning, a real object, which it is very stupid and very wicked to cry down for any party purpose, and that there is probably some base mixture with that good purpose, or with the means for effecting it, to which no circumstances existing or not existing, no trumpery generalities, no clever sarcasms, can reconcile the conscience of any honest man. He will not allow himself to join in cheap declamations, against the abomination of our whole scheme of foreign policy (in India for instance), as if we had been from first to last mere highwaymen. He will feel how easy it is to utter phrases of this kind, and to earn the reputation of setting up a high standard by uttering them. But what, he will ask, comes of them, except a just indignation in the mind of every man who feels that he is aiming to do right in that sphere of labour in which he is told no man can do right—an ease to the conscience of every bad man, who understands that he is only following out maxims which in his circumstances are inevitable. Therefore to act upon just the opposite rule to this, to assume that there has been a principle blindly or wrongly followed, even in the midst of our bad doings, and that this principle may be recognised and applied to the consideration of

every specific act, justifying it if it be right, condemning it if it be wrong ; this seems to be the honest and reasonable course for a man who wishes rather to do good, than to have credit for his way of discoursing about it<sup>1</sup>.

IV. But the application of this method to practice presupposes the use of it in the study of history. Who can estimate the evil effects of that habit, which in this study has prevailed so largely, of pronouncing sentence upon whole generations of men, under the names of 'dark,' or 'superstitious,' or 'barbarous,' or of the reaction which follows, when good is discovered in them, and they begin to be idolized? Who can measure

<sup>1</sup> I could scarcely avoid thinking of our Indian policy when I made these remarks, because it has been recently discussed in a volume which exposes the wrong method, of which I have been speaking, with incomparable clearness and force, but exposes it still more effectually by exhibiting an example of the true and righteous method which is appropriate to every political question. I allude to Mr Lushington's "Little Wars of a Great Nation," (Parker, London,) a book combining a singularly beautiful narrative with the soundest and manliest political morality. No one who feels the importance of applying great principles to passing occurrences, will complain of the writer for devoting gifts so rare, informed by a still rarer zeal for truth and honesty, to the wars of Affghanistan and Scinde. But Mr Lushington's readers will have some reason to find fault with him, if he do not hereafter endow the literature of his country with some great and enduring history.



the mischief to his own mind, of having been taught to speak and think scornfully of men, as mere charlatans and impostors, because they did some wrong, or were betrayed into self-glorification, who were yet full of earnestness and hope, and really desired to utter and to spread truth? Who has not felt a miserable confusion in his mind when this error has been detected, and it has seemed to him as if all things or all men might be equally true or false? Who has not heard acts and men condemned as utterly wrong and evil, when he has felt nevertheless that there was something in them which he must admire, nay, which the very persons who were condemning them did admire? Who has not in consequence been tempted to the opinion, that the higher standard which the judge professed to set up was merely artificial, merely something to be talked about, and not to be followed? Who has not applied the maxims of his own age, in determining what was right or wrong in times gone by, and who, when he has been convinced of his injustice, has not caught himself yielding to the notion, that each age has a certain standard of its own, and that to talk of a right and a wrong for all times is imposture? Such opposite perils lie in this study, which yet of all seems the one to which this century is most called, and for which its better men have most gifts. But surely he who



has manfully studied the facts which directly concern his own life, will be able to see his way through these contradictions, for he will have encountered them already in another sphere. He has felt that he must recognize a permanent standard for himself; that in different stages of his life, different sides and portions of it reveal themselves to him; that in each different stage of his life there are particular counterfeits, mocking that truth which he then is especially required to take hold of; that if he yields to them, they hide it from him, that if he resists them, more of the truth is manifested to him, and he is able better to connect it with that which he knew before. He feels also that he cannot stop in his course; the child must become the boy, the boy must become the man; and the child, the boy, the man must each meet the temptations of his own time, whether he has trained himself to meet them by a right use of the former time or no. He knows too that in each new period there is a stronger light about him, as well as a thicker darkness: he cannot deny either fact for the sake of the other, since each involves the other. Let a man but bravely carry this knowledge into history, (and if he has fairly earned it in one department it will go with him to the other—it will be part of the habit of his mind,) and then I think the puzzles he meets with there will furnish indeed

continual exercise to his conscience and reason, but a healthful, profitable, hopeful exercise. The words, "Judge not, that thou be not judged," will be ever present to him, as one of the deepest commands ever uttered. And the more he applies this principle, the more lovingly he sympathises with his fellow-men, feels their temptations to be his own, rejoices in the portion of light which has been vouchsafed to them, wonders that they followed it as they did, when he thinks how he has used his own—the more will a clear and severe judgment of good and evil acts, of good and evil principles, form itself in his mind, the less will he tolerate any confusion of right and wrong, the more readily will he recognise one who is seeking to be right and true under whatever difficulties, and turn away with disgust from a mere pretender. This severity is not alien from that charity; they grow together, they are of one substance, they cannot bear to be separated.

This habit of connecting his own life with the life of history, must, I conceive, be of great worth to the practical politician. What a sad thing it is that the newspapers should be so much a world of their own! that the great and marvellous facts of the present should be so little seen by the light of the past, and the past so little recognised as having any relation to them; that the one should be regarded only as

a storehouse of illustrations for schoolboy themes, or parliamentary harangues, the other as a sphere in which men are to live at hazard, doing what is best under existing circumstances. Surely Roman history, and Greek history, and middle-age history, are meant to assist us in understanding corn-laws and poor-laws. Surely it is not well to read about the Servile war, or the Peasant's war, without remembering that the people in Italy and in Germany, nineteen centuries ago, and three centuries ago, were of the same flesh and blood with those who crowd our factories, or set fire to our stacks.

But especially, I think, is this habit demanded of those who occupy themselves with the history of the Church, and its relation to human society generally. It is fearful to think what immoral maxims we have applied to this study; how we have dared to lie for the sake of upholding truth and righteousness; how we have fancied it was a duty to lower and degrade that which belongs to the earth, for the sake of glorifying the kingdom of heaven which has been set up in the midst of it to exalt and purify it. And all this evil, with the fearful party notions which have generated it, and been generated by it, seems to spring mainly from our looking on this body as if it were meant to be something inhuman, or anti-human, instead of being meant to embody the idea of perfection in hu-

manity—to shew forth the glory which God has put upon it. A deep consideration of the way in which all immoral sophistry connects itself with a denial of a moral ground for man as man, and of the necessity imposed upon earnest and religious men, like Law, who encountered sophistry, above all things, to assert this ground, may, I hope, help to set us right in this matter, to shew us why we have gone so far wrong, to make us feel the reality of many principles which perhaps we have been fighting for stoutly, without perceiving what bearing they have upon practice and life.

V. But the moral teaching of the last age was most effectually displaced by the religious revolution which took place at the close of it. That Blair and the traders in moral commonplaces, should have fallen before the Methodist power, was most natural; it may seem harder that Berkeley and Butler should have been confounded in the same category with these. But hard, or not, the fate was inevitable. The thoughtful student had no more voice for the people than the fashionable preacher. The hearts of colliers and pickpockets could no more be reached by an announcement of the laws of human life and action, than by well-turned sentences about decorum. That which could reach them had evidence of power in it, which the sagest book on ethical science could not offer.

Thank God that the power made itself felt, whatever it may have swept away in its course!

If the world be not made for scholars and gentlemen, if it is worth anything that the spiritual existence of a poor man should be recognised, if there be truth in the assertion of moralists, that moral principles belong to one man as much as to another, then we must rejoice that the Methodist stood his ground against all the opposition which he encountered from weak men and strong men, from bad men and good men—from those who dreaded the new influence, because it disturbed the peace of a generation which was settling upon its lees, and from those who feared that superficial temporary excitements might be substituted for fixed and eternal principles.

The victory, I think, may be considered quite decisive, but the trophies of it are not such as the good men who fought the battle wished to see. They are to be found in the almost total disuse of the moral phrases which were current in respectable books of the last century, and the introduction and circulation throughout society of another set of phrases, belonging, as it is commonly said, to a heart-religion. Now so far as these phrases are significant, they must be most precious; so far as they denote the tone and direction of popular feeling, they have



a secondary, historical, but still real, value; so far as they are a mere mode of the day, they must in themselves be pronounced worthless, but very fearful when one considers what feelings, or what truths, they ought to represent, and how much of life must have died, how much of death must have lived, before they can have lost their value.

We are bound to believe however that they have not yet lost it altogether. And lest the depreciation should go on still more rapidly than it has done, we are bound also to ask how it may be arrested. By consulting the records of those men who circulated these phrases when they fetched the least in the market, we may perhaps get the answer. The old Methodist preacher spoke to men sunk in evil. He told them that they were so, and they knew he was right. But he spoke to them as *sunken men*; whatever the evil above them, beneath them, within them, might be, *they* were there. The voice which spoke to them told them they might be raised out of the mire; the promise was that they should, if they did not choose to abide in it. A power, they were told, had interfered on their behalf—a power which could and would bring them into a righteous state—make them righteous men. This was the good news which was declared to them; all strength from above was to lead to this; every energy



of any kind awakened within themselves was to lead to this. The Lord of all was willing to make them righteous; they were to believe in him, and trust him, that they might become so. This teaching was in the strictest sense *moral* teaching; this exhortation was a *moral* exhortation; however little even great moralists might recognise it, or sympathise with it. And I cannot but think that in losing the morality of the Methodist teachers, we lose their power. Unless we remember that what a man wants is to be raised out of wrong, and to be made right, and that whoever offers him any boon of which this is not the greatest part, does not offer him the thing which he wants, our words must be feeble indeed. And this is surely a great danger of our time. We but half believe that to be true and right is the best thing of all; we half fancy that there is a better thing to which this is only a means. With this feeling another is necessarily connected. We cannot really speak to men as if there were that in them which desired righteousness, which would fain rise out of darkness and death, if it knew the way. Nay, we hardly think that this desire can be kindled in any one's mind, except by help of some secondary stimuli, which, if we looked fairly at facts, we should see could have very little power indeed, except to confuse the conscience—a conscience confused enough

already, and requiring nothing so much as to be dealt with straightly and honestly. It seems as if we had forgotten that evil is a present burden, crushing men to death; as if we thought it had some distant prospect of becoming a burden, when punishment should have been inflicted for it. We do not seem to believe that good is a good now, only that it may prove to be so hereafter, when a certain amount of pleasure has been appended to it. But if such maxims as these be adopted, what is called heart-preaching must become a very poor trade indeed—as poor as the moral preaching of the times gone by. For what heart is it that you speak to? Not one seeking in ignorance and confusion a something to embrace that it may rise out of itself, looking amidst a thousand images to find the perfect object of love which it has need of. You do not believe that there is such a heart as this in your fellow-man, otherwise you could at once present the pure and righteous object to it. But you are holding converse with a creature which must be persuaded by certain devices of rhetoric, by arguments of fear, or arguments of hope, not to neglect its own interest—not to be lost when it has the means of being saved. If indeed, these words, ‘lost’ and ‘saved,’ were connected with moral death and moral life, with slavery and freedom, none might be better. But if they have lost this stamp, another of a

very low and earthly kind becomes gradually impressed upon them; they merely awaken that selfishness we are sent to fight against. The more we foster this selfishness, the more utterly dead becomes the man whom we are to move. Our words may be tolerated, because they mean nothing to him. But his farm and his merchandize must be the real things in his mind; all his notions of losing and saving belong to these, and interpret themselves by these. Then, because the case seems so hopeless, we must bring new machinery to bear upon it. And if at last we cannot subdue the worldliness of men by calling it forth, we think we may at least make some impression upon the nerves of women; in the dialect of some popular preachers the affections and the nerves seem to be convertible terms.

Yet we are not left without witnesses of the truth, that a righteous state, and deliverance from an evil one, is that which men long for; and that the promise of this, set directly before them, is more efficacious than all arguments addressed to their self-interest. The temperance movement in Ireland, and even in England and America, if we will but look fairly at the history of it, is decisive upon this point. All kinds of evidence have been produced to prove how much harm comes from drunkenness; what are the advantages and blessings of sobriety. And

if the greatest change in this kind had been wrought in a sagacious calculating nation, there might be some pretence for the opinion (though, I think, a very poor one) that besotted men had heard this evidence, had felt the force of it, had weighed it against the present temptation, had deliberately entered upon a new scheme of life. But when the people which really abandons its evil habits is one proverbially uncalculating, incapable of tracing the relation between acts and their results, we are compelled, whether we will or no, into another hypothesis, which is equally applicable to both cases. We must believe that it is the sense of present degradation and wrong which makes the preacher's word intelligible; that it is the feeling 'there is a truer state, and it is the one I am meant for,' which makes his promise of a divine help and deliverance seem most reasonable. A man fast bound within the meshes of an evil habit, which holds him the faster the more he strives to extricate himself, feels there is a *dignus vindice nodus*; that he must and may look for a divine rescue. This faith he has, and it is an honest and true one. If Father Mathew, or any one else, do on any occasion abuse it, or devise stratagems to make it stronger, I am sure that he does a wicked and foolish thing, which ultimately defeats his own object. But to attribute the great work he has been effecting, whether

it be permanent or transitory, to the falsehood which may have mingled with his truth, and not to the truth, seems to me ridiculous as well as wrong. The Irish people, be it remembered, are used to all the machinery of religious terrors. Curses from the altar they may hear every Sunday; the belief of a mysterious divine power which is to do them good, to raise them out of evil, this they wanted; and the effects of it, when it was imparted, are not greater than any one might expect who believes in the divine government of the world. Those effects must undoubtedly disappear, if the principle which produced them do not work also in other directions—if the people are not led to seek truth in their other words and acts, truth in their inward parts. But I am speaking simply as to the nature of these effects, and what they indicate respecting the object we should propose to ourselves, and which we should believe that all divine influences are conspiring to accomplish.

A book, then, which leads us to think about the foundations of morality may be very helpful to those who desire to cultivate a heart-religion in themselves or in others; not by turning them away from their proper pursuit, or moderating their zeal in it, but by giving more clearness and substance to their thoughts, and by teaching them better to understand the kind of



beings with whom they have to deal. Their guides in this path were, it should be remembered, brought up in the moral discipline of the last age, and however they may have despised it, they profited by it. Far indeed am I from thinking that this discipline would be sufficient for our wants. The Christian teacher in this day finds feelings stirring about him, which, in the days of his fathers, were almost dormant. It is not only in the schools, or among the upper classes, that political questions have taken the place of purely moral ones. The labourer or mechanic, in the days of Wesley, had felt that he was a clod, and learnt to believe that he was a spirit; the poor man now feels that he is in some way connected with a society which is either owning him as a member, or treating him as an outcast. The difference is immense. Would that our young clergy understood it, or were in the way to understand it! Would that they had that free intercourse with their poorer countrymen, which would enable them to know what thoughts are actually awake in them—what they are actually seeking after! Or why do I say, of our poorer countrymen? What a blessing it would be if we had a free, open fellowship with any class; if any men did not think themselves bound, in compliment to us, to suppress all the deep thoughts of their minds, and to parade before us only what is most shal-



low and artificial. What a hateful privilege it is thus to be cut off from real communion with the very creatures whom we are appointed to help—with whose sorrows, conflicts, temptations, we ought to have greater sympathy than all other people. What a dark opinion the privilege rests upon, that we do not really believe the things we speak, and that it is very rude and wrong to make us sensible of our uncomfortable and insincere position. At all events, let us determine that this opinion shall have no foundation; let us shew that we believe it is good for ourselves, and for all men, to be detected in whatever is false and wrong, and not to hide it; that we know the falsehood is in ourselves, and not in our position; that we feel that to be a perpetual assertion of what is real and substantial, against what is conventional and shadowy; that in order to be true to it, we feel we must be true in ourselves. Which consideration brings us back to the same point as before. We must learn first to believe that personal morality is not a thing of modes and accidents; then we shall feel that social life is equally solid; then, with these two convictions, we may speak boldly to the affections and understandings of our countrymen: knowing that we have something to set before them which is worth their having, and for which they will not find a substitute elsewhere.

VI. When I spoke of a tendency among ourselves to bribe men with promises of happiness, or to terrify them with threats of punishment, instead of recognising at once a deeper want, and a deeper evil, of which they are conscious, or may become conscious, I did not mean that there was no similar weakness in the last age. I have already noted instances of it in two men of first-rate wisdom and excellence, Berkeley and Butler, and though I cannot discover any equally flagrant offences in this treatise of Law, I am far from saying that he is entirely free from the habit of mind which gave rise to them. In many passages of his answer to Mandeville he speaks of Happiness as the great end of all man's aims and strivings. Now Happiness in his nomenclature is the satisfaction of all man's capacities and necessities, the order and harmony of his being; in other words, it is the right state of a man; all jarring, confusion, disorder, being the necessary result, or rather the exponent of wrong. Such a view of happiness excludes the notion, that the great thing which a man has to desire, is some consequence or reward or superadded bliss; it makes the right or righteous state of a man, whatever that may be, identical with his felicity. The dispute, therefore, might seem to be one of words, and so in a sense it is. But what need was there for the word? Why did one so clear and

logical, so anxious to assert moral principles, feel himself obliged to use a form of language, which apparently—yes, and for his readers really—has the effect of substituting some other end for the moral end?

The question is a very important one: the answers to it, I think, are two. First, he felt that morality to be good at all must be good for mankind—where by good I mean practically available. He did not wish to exclude any human creature from the benefits which belonged to the race. But he had no experience to tell him that men generally can be more affected by a higher principle than by a lower one; apparently, the evidence was in favour of the opposite conclusion. And therefore he would tolerate a flaw in his own reasoning, and something like a general degradation of the species, rather than seem to set up a high rule, which only a few could acknowledge. This, I think, is one apology for a kind of language which seems, at first sight, more inconsistent in these professed moralists than it would be in other men. But, if what I have said already be true, this defence is taken away from us. We have no pretext for looking upon the poorest and worst of our fellow-creatures as more susceptible of influences from mean or secondary principles, than from the higher. We have direct and accumulated evidence to the contrary. All

appeals to the people are testimonies that the more you look upon them as open only to sordid arguments, the less you will prevail; that the more you address them as human beings, nay, as having a direct relation to that which is above humanity, the more you will move them. Thus the case is the same here as in physical science; each fresh experiment brings out some ascertained truth into clearer manifestation, and makes unnecessary some of the webs of speculation and fancy which men have woven for themselves about it. But I cannot help perceiving another reason, too, which I think operated upon these great men. They felt that moral principles are altogether different from mere rules and maxims of conduct—that they are not abstractions at all, but realities. But how are they to be realised? How establish practically the distinction between a principle and a rule, a mere dead sentence and a living law? The answer, of course is, ‘Let it be embodied, let it be seen in life.’ But men whose special province it was to discover the law in its strictness and completeness, had a natural dread of determining its strength by instances in which it only came out partially and confusedly. Or it would be more correct to say, their habit of mind, both from its excellences and defects, was unfavourable to personality. Now it seems very natural, that persons labouring under the diffi-

culty I have described, feeling the impotency of mere principles in their naked form—or rather feeling that in that form they were *not* properly speaking principles, living roots of living acts—should seek to make up for this deficiency by appending certain promises of pleasure or happiness to these principles, trusting that these would be links by which they might attach themselves to the heart.

But the religious teachers who followed these moralists were altogether personal; they spoke to each man not about laws, but about himself: it was a personal object which they continually presented to his affection and trust. Why then does the same necessity exist for them? The necessity, I apprehend, arises in this way. Personality has its own corrupt tendency, a tendency to make the person addressed regard himself as a centre, and so look upon all acts of grace and condescension as done for his sake. When this state of mind has reached its height, the Being whom he professes to trust in and adore is no longer contemplated as the perfect Form of beauty and loveliness which the heart craves for, and by beholding which it can alone be exalted. He is regarded—the word must be spoken, for the profaneness lies in the thing, and not in the description—simply as an Agent, an instrument to confer certain benefits upon his creatures. And these



benefits will be measured by the creature's own notion of things: it is not the benefit of being raised up to see the perfect standard, and to be fashioned after it—for the standard has been lost, the man has become his own standard—but it is the getting something which he calls Happiness, the escape from something which he calls Suffering. I have no words to express my sense of the moral feebleness, the degradation of the Christian, and of the national character, which this mode of contemplating the hopes and promises of religion seems threatening to produce in us.

If these opposite causes seem to have led to the same result, it is evident there can be no escape from this danger into the moral notions of the last age. But we may derive good from that age if we learn to connect their strong sense of a moral law and principle with our desire to see everything embodied and made personal. It is from this union alone, I believe, that we can hope for a sound and manly *Theology*. Much has been said of late about the distinction between scientific and popular theology, and the importance of not confounding them. In the sense in which these words are used, I have no doubt the caution may be a valuable one. Men in general need not be troubled with criticism, and are not competent to understand it. But if we follow the analogy



of other studies, I imagine that the mere criticism of facts, of words, or of sources, though it may be an important aid to science, can never be said to constitute it. A Science of Nature must, in its highest sense, be a knowledge of the Powers and the Laws of nature, or of some meeting point in which Law and Power become one. The Science of Man must be the knowledge of the Laws under which Humanity exists, and of the Powers appertaining to it. And surely, in Theology the same must hold true. It cannot be some one of the operations leading to this knowledge, but that whereto they all lead, which deserves the name. But I cannot believe that *this* knowledge has need to separate itself more widely from that which is popular and belongs to all. It seems to me that coldness and dryness on the one side, confusion and idolatry on the other, have been the effects of this separation, and that the sooner it is terminated the better. The notion of its necessity I fear has proceeded from the feeling that poor men want certain helps and appliances to make them decent, or well-behaved, or good, but that they do not need the knowledge of the living and true God ; that this is altogether above them ; that in place of it they must be content with a religion. Now it seems to me that every day is confounding this notion ; is teaching us that every man everywhere is in peril of atheism,

and that the deepest knowledge of all, that which, we are told, is eternal life, is that of which every man everywhere is in want. If this knowledge be Theology, in its simplest, truest sense, and every part of theology points to this as explaining its meaning and its relation to every other part, then is it a living science, which sustains, connects, crowns all others; a science for the attainment and diffusion of which it is worth while to live and die. If this be theology, the method of it must be living and wonderful, like that to which it leads, and in which it terminates. He who leads the heart and reason of man into it, and gives lowliness, and courage, and hope to move along in it, must Himself be living, and mysterious, and divine. And dreary, jejune, without a centre, without an end—a system, not a science—must, I think, be all theology which is not of this kind. Safe, indeed, will it be from all popular sympathy; whether it is taught or untaught, believed or rejected, must seem to acting working men a matter of profound indifference. But what more precious uses has it for the man of most earnest study, of deepest meditation? Being nearer to the tree, more within reach of its fruits, having pined more for them, he understands better than all others their dryness, bitterness, rottenness. From his inmost soul will burst again the "*leider auch Theologie*"

of Faust, as the last and highest expression of sadness and discontent, signifying how a series of profitless, hopeless studies, find in this their climax—how when this is reached, the result of all is *known* to be nothingness. And yet when he ventures from the cave to the market-place, he may almost persuade himself that the wares which are exposed there have even less of substance than that raw material of them which he has examined in his solitude. For there the abstractions which had presented themselves to him as naked skeletons are painted and dressed out, the hollow sockets filled with eye-balls, the shapes made to move by some impulse not their own, a semblance of sense, even of speech, given to them, multitudes ready to fall down and worship them. A sad alternative if he must indeed choose between acknowledged death and the counterfeits of life! A profitable comparison if it leads him to reflect that what is demanded here is demanded also there; that what he was hungering and thirsting to find, amidst the dry bones of theological systems, was Righteousness, the Absolute Truth—that which actually is; that what men are hungering and thirsting after, amidst these idols, is still Righteousness: only they can teach him that this Perfect Righteousness is worth nothing, is nothing, unless it dwell in a Living Being, to whom they are related; he can teach them that this

Being loses that very perfection, which their hearts seek for, when they form him after their image, instead of believing that they are formed after His. And thus, in discovering the needful reconciliation between what is popular and what is scientific, he realises the necessary and eternal connexion between moral science and theological science, as well as between moral practice and the idea of a Perfect Being; he feels how each is destroyed by the effort to put them asunder.

VII. I admit, however, that there is another idea in some sense higher than this, which, in this day especially, will be continually presenting itself to us. In all directions we shall find men searching after unity, endeavouring to connect all the objects of their thoughts and feelings together, to fuse the different elements of society into one, to establish a harmony in the sciences, to exhibit all schemes and systems of religion as portions of a great whole or as indications of a wish to form one. No one can hold much converse with his fellow-men without perceiving that this tendency is at work in one direction as much as in another. No one can know himself without being aware that it is at work in him—I think, without feeling that he would be wrong to stifle it. But no one also can help seeing that in pursuit of this object men are disposed to obliterate all distinctions—to make

a desert, and call it peace—to combine all discords, and call them harmony—to establish a unity in which there shall be no centre. Now the protection from these perils is in our laying a firm moral foundation, before we enter upon this question of unity; in our recognising the eternal opposition of right and wrong as a starting point; in our confessing a Righteous Being as the ground of our life, and the object of our hopes. Then the idea of unity will gradually unfold itself in a form which will be satisfactory to the reason, without insulting the conscience and moral feelings. Theology will feel that it is capable of meeting this class of our wants and feelings, that it can reveal the true idea of unity, and that this idea connects itself with all human relationships—interprets them, glorifies them.

In the assurance that it is his vocation thus to come into contact with all that is most real and practical, that a revelation from Heaven proves itself by the light it throws upon the earth, the theological student will tremble while he reflects how much confusion he may be the means of introducing into other studies, and into human life. In the notion which has formally received the sanction of some great names, and which has secretly incorporated itself with much of our popular divinity, that the words which express characteristics of the Divine Being may possibly have an altogether different signification in that

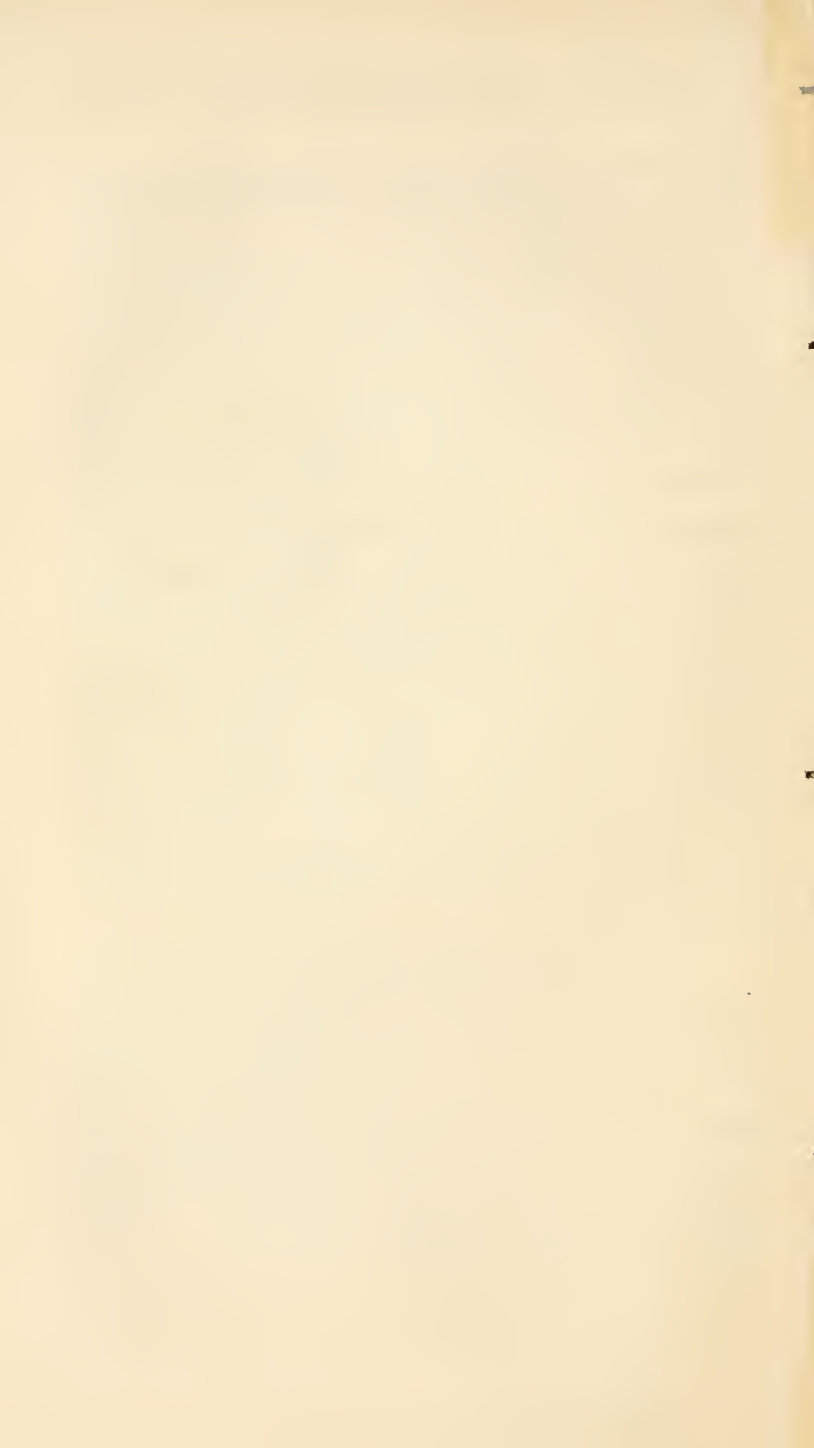


application from the one which they bear when they are used respecting human agents, he will discover a root out of which all uncertainties and contradictions in every region of thought may naturally develop themselves. How plausible the opinion is—how readily it commends itself to the heart which does not like to retain God in its knowledge, and is glad to substitute for Him, even to its own bitter cost, a POWER utterly arbitrary, imposing rules which have no counterpart in itself, making Right, not being Right—how hard it is to shake off the dreadful vision, when once it has been contemplated, and to rise into the confession of One whom we may call our Father, describing by that name a real, not an imaginary relation—he will know too well, from his own history, and from the history of the world. But the necessity of the emancipation he will equally have learnt from both, as well as the impossibility of morality, on the other hypothesis, being anything but a dream—the assertion that we are made in the image of God a monstrous fiction. Once sanction the doctrine that there is, or can be, a diversity in kind between the mercy and justice of the perfectly Merciful and Just, and the mercy and justice which He begets in his creatures, and these words become mere counters, upon which we may put any value, or traffic with in any way we please. It is idle, then, to seek for any re-



lation between social acts or principles and individual acts or principles ; all the anomalies of the world easily assume the character of laws ; the theory that Private Vices are Public Benefits, may be just as sound and rational as any other. Determine, on the contrary, to maintain that He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all, and that the pure essential light is the source of every ray of it which has ever cheered the universe, and the fancy that any of the lower forms which refract it can change its nature, is rejected as simply impossible. There cannot be so deep a conviction in the mind of any man, that the same law rules the motions of the planets, and the flight of an insect, as there must be that the Eternal Righteousness and Law which dwell in the heart of the Creator, do alone hold human society together, and declare what at every moment of his life each of us is meant to be.

I may seem to have wandered very far from the book which has given occasion to these remarks ; but I have never consciously forgotten it, or my purpose, which was to shew that the subject, and the principle of it, very greatly concern us, whatever be the course of thought to which we have devoted ourselves. I now leave the reader to a wiser Guide.



## REMARKS UPON A BOOK ENTITLED THE FABLE OF THE BEES.

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SIR,

I HAVE read your several compositions in favour of the vices and corruptions of mankind, and hope I need make no apology for presuming to offer a word or two on the side of virtue and religion.

I shall spend no time in preface, or general reflections, but proceed directly to the examination of such passages as expose *moral virtue* as a fraud and imposition, and render all pretences to it as odious and contemptible.

Though I direct myself to you, I hope it will be no offence if I sometimes speak as if I was speaking to a Christian, or shew some ways of thinking that may be owing to that kind of worship which is professed amongst us. Ways of thinking derived from revealed religion are much more suitable to our low capacities, than any arrogant pretences to be wise by our own light.

*Moral virtue*, however disregarded in practice, has hitherto had a speculative esteem amongst men ; her praises have been celebrated

by authors of all kinds, as the confessed beauty, ornament, and perfection of human nature.

On the contrary, *immorality* has been looked upon as the greatest reproach and torment of mankind; no satire has been thought severe enough upon its natural baseness and deformity, nor any wit able to express the evils it occasions in private life and public societies.

Your goodness would not suffer you to see this part of christendom deluded with such false notions, of I know not what *excellence* in virtue, or *evil* in vice; but obliged you immediately to compose a *system* (as you call it) wherein you do these three things.

1st. You consider man *merely* as an *animal*, having, like other animals, nothing to do but to follow his appetites.

2dly. You consider man as cheated and flattered out of his natural state by the craft of moralists, and pretend to be very sure that the *moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride*.

So that man and morality are here both destroyed together; man is declared to be only an *animal* and morality an imposture.

According to this doctrine, to say that a man is dishonest, is making him just such a criminal as a horse that does not dance.

But this is not all, for you dare further affirm in praise of immorality, *that evil, as*

*well moral as natural, is the solid basis, the life and support of all trades and employments without exception; that there we must look for the true origin of all arts and sciences; and that the moment evil ceases, the society must be spoiled, if not dissolved*<sup>1</sup>.

These are the principal doctrines which with more than fanatic zeal you recommend to your readers; and if lewd stories, profane observations, loose jests, and haughty assertions, might pass for arguments, few people would be able to dispute with you.

I shall begin with your definition of man. *As for my part, say you, without any compliment to the courteous reader, or myself, I believe, man (besides skin, flesh, bones, &c. that are obvious to the eye) to be a compound of various passions, that all of them as they are provoked, and come uppermost, govern him by turns, whether he will or no*<sup>2</sup>.

Surely this definition is too general, because it seems to suit a *wolf*, or a *bear*, as exactly as yourself, or a *Grecian philosopher*.

You say, *you believe man to be, &c.* Now I cannot understand to what part of you this believing faculty is to be ascribed; for your definition of man makes him incapable of believing any thing, unless believing can be said to be a *passion*, or some faculty of *skin* or *bones*.

<sup>1</sup> p. 428.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction.

But supposing such a belief as yours, because of its blindness, might justly be called a passion, yet surely there are greater things conceived by some men than can be ascribed to mere passions, or skin and flesh.

That reach of thought, and strong penetration which has carried Sir Isaac Newton through such regions of science, must truly be owing to some higher principle. Or will you say, that all his demonstrations are only so many blind sallies of passion?

If man had nothing but *instincts* and *passions*, he could not *dispute* about them; for to *dispute* is no more an *instinct* or a *passion*, than it is a *leg* or an *arm*.

If therefore you would prove yourself to be no more than a *brute*, or an *animal*, how much of your life you need alter I cannot tell, but you must at least forbear writing against virtue, for no *mere animal* ever hated it.

But however, since you desire to be thought only *skin* and *flesh*, and a *compound of passions*, I will forget your better part, as much as you have done, and consider you in your own way. You tell us, *that the moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride*<sup>1</sup>.

You therefore, who are an advocate for moral vices, should, by the rule of contraries,

<sup>1</sup> p. 37.



be supposed to be acted by *humility*; but that being (as I think) not of the number of the passions, you have no claim to be guided by it.

The prevailing passions which you say have the sole government of man in their turns, are pride, shame, fear, lust, and anger; you have appropriated the moral virtues to *pride*, so that your own conduct must be ascribed either to fear, shame, anger, or lust, or else to a beautiful union and concurrence of them all.

I doubt not but you are already angry that I consider you only as an animal, that acts as anger, or lust, or any other passion moves it, although it is your own assertion that you are no better. But to proceed,

*Sagacious moralists*, say you, *draw men like angels, in hopes that the pride at least of some will put them upon copying after the beautiful originals, which they are represented to be*<sup>2</sup>.

I am loth to charge you with sagacity, because I would not accuse you falsely; but if this remark is well made, I can help you to another full as just, viz. *That sagacious advocates for immorality draw men like brutes, in hopes that the depravity at least of some will put them upon copying after the base originals, which they are represented to be*.

The province you have chosen for yourself,

<sup>2</sup> p. 38.

is to deliver man from the *sagacity* of moralists, the encroachments of virtue, and to replace him in the rights and privileges of brutality ; to recall him from the giddy heights of rational dignity, and angelic likeness, to go to grass, or wallow in the mire.

Had the excellence of man's nature been only a false insinuation of crafty politicians, the very falseness of the thing had made some men at peace with it ; but this doctrine coming from heaven, its being a principle of religion, and a foundation of solid virtue, has roused up all this zeal against it.

And God said, *Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.*

This was a declaration of the dignity of man's nature, made long before any of your sagacious moralists had a meeting. As this doctrine came thus early from heaven, so in the several ages of the world God has had his *oracles* and *prophets*, to raise men's thoughts to their first original ; to preserve a sense of their relation to God, and angelic natures, and encourage them to expect a state of greatness suitable to that image after which they were created ; to assure *them*, that *they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and*

*they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever*<sup>1</sup>.

The last revelation which God has made to the world, by his Son Jesus Christ, is greatly glorious in this respect, that it has more perfectly brought life and immortality to light; that it turns our thoughts from the low satisfactions of flesh and sense, to press and aspire after the deathless state of greatness, where we shall be *as the angels of God*.

It is not therefore the sagacity and cunning of any philosophers that has tricked men into notions of morality, as a thing suitable to a pretended dignity of nature within them.

But it is God himself who first declared the excellence of human nature, and has made so many revelations since, to fill men's minds with high and noble desires suitable to it.

Before I proceed to consider your *Enquiry into your Origin of Moral Virtue*, I shall take notice of the apology that you make to Jews and Christians.

You are sensible that what you have said is inconsistent both with the old and new testament, and therefore thus excuse yourself to your scrupulous reader.

That in *your enquiry into the origin of moral virtue, you speak neither of the Jews*

<sup>1</sup> Dan. xii. 2, 3.

*nor Christians, but man in his state of nature and ignorance of the true Deity*<sup>1</sup>.

The absurdity of this apology will appear from hence : Let us suppose that you had been making an *enquiry into the origin of the world*, and should declare that it arose from a *casual concourse of atoms*, and then tell your scrupulous reader, by way of excuse, that you did not mean the world which *Jews and Christians* dwell upon, but that which is inhabited by *man in his state of nature and ignorance of the true Deity*. Could any thing be more weak or senseless than such an apology ? Yet it is exactly the same as that which you have here made.

For the difference of *Jew or heathen* no more supposes or allows of two different *origins of morality*, than it supposes or allows of two different origins of the world. *no?*

For as the creation of the world was over, and owing to its true cause, before the existence of either *Jew or heathen*, so morality was in being, and sprung from its proper source, before either *Jew or heathen* came into the world. And consequently neither the origin of the one or the other admits of any different account, because in the after ages of the world some people were called *Jews*, and others *heathens*. Besides, if you contradict the religion of *Jews*

<sup>1</sup> p. 35.

and Christians, in your account of morality, is it less a contradiction, or less false, because you pretend that your face was turned towards *Pagans*?

If you was to assert that there was no God, or true religion, could it be any excuse to say that you was speaking to a *Mahometan*?

2dly. To defend your account of the origin of morality, you suppose man in a state of nature, savage and brutal, without any notions of morality or ideas of religion.

Now this very supposition is so far from being any apology for you, that it enhances your accusation: for you suppose such a state of nature (as you call it) as the scripture makes it morally impossible that men should ever have been in.

When Noah's family came out of the ark we presume they were as well educated in the principles of virtue and moral wisdom as any people were ever since; at least, we are sure they were well instructed in the true religion.

There was therefore a time when all the people in the world were well versed in moral virtue, and worshipped God according to the true religion.

He therefore that gives a *later* account of the origin of moral virtue, gives a *false* account of it.

Now as all parts of the world were by



degrees inhabited by the descendants of such ancestors as were well instructed both in religion and morality, it is morally impossible that there should be any nation of the world amongst whom there were no remains of morality, no instances of virtue, no principles of religion derived from their ancestors.

At least it is absolutely impossible for you to shew that there was any such nation, free from all impressions of religion and morality. This you can no more do than you can shew that all the world are not descended from *Adam*.

So that your *origin of moral virtue* supposes a state of man which the scriptures make it morally impossible ever to happen, and which it is absolutely impossible for you to shew that it really did ever happen.

But supposing some of the posterity of *Noah*, in some corner of the world, should have become so degenerate as to have not the least remains of virtue or religion left among them ; and suppose some philosophers should get among them, and wheedle and flatter them into some notions of morality ; could that be called an account of the *origin* of moral virtue, when moral virtue from the beginning of the world had been practised and taught by the virtuous ancestors of such a depraved offspring?

To make the taming of some such supposed



savage creatures the *origin of morality*, is as just a way of thinking, as to make the history of the curing people in *Bedlam* a true account of the *origin of reason*.

3dly. Your apology to your scrupulous reader, as if your origin of morality related not to Jews or Christians, is false and absurd.

Because the observations which you have made upon human nature, on which your origin of moral virtue is founded, are only so many observations upon the manners of *all orders of Christians*. It is their falseness, hypocrisy, pride, and passion, that have induced you to consider morality as having no rational foundation in man's nature, but as the *political offspring which flattery begot upon pride*.

And yet you, *good man*, are not talking about *Christians* or *Jews*.

But every page of your book confutes that excuse, and indeed needs must; for how should your observations relate to any but to those people whose natures and practices have furnished you with them?

*I have*, say you, *searched through every degree and station of men*; at last you tell us, you went to the *convents*, but even there you found that all was *farce* and *hypocrisy*<sup>1</sup>.

You tell us also, that whoever searches thus deep into *human nature*, will find *that moral*

<sup>1</sup> p. 263.

*virtue is the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride.* Yet this searching into all orders of men, into convents, and from thence making this discovery, that morality is all owing to *pride* and *policy*, is not pronouncing any thing upon Christians.

Nothing can be more weak than to form your opinion of human nature upon the tempers and practices of all orders of Christians, and then pretend you are only treating of man in such a state of nature as you never saw one in in your life.

For how can your observations upon men under the power of education, custom, laws, and religion, tell you what man is in a supposed state where all these are wanting?

Or will you say that you are acquainted, and intimately acquainted with men, so entirely divested of all the ideas of religion, morality, and virtue, that you can make their natures a true specimen of man in his most savage, brutal condition?

Though your knowledge of human nature was great, yet you was forced, it seems, to visit the *convents*, before you could pronounce any thing of them. It seems therefore necessary, in order to know what creatures men are in a state of brutality, destitute of all sense of God and virtue, that you should know where to visit them.

Again, this *apology* of yours happens to be inconsistent with the first and main principle upon which your fine discourse is founded: I mean your definition of *man*, whom you define to be, besides *skin, flesh, and bones, &c. a compound of various passions*. This is the vile, abominable, false, proud *animal*, that you treat of under the name of man. In your excuse you tell us, this is man only in a state of *nature*; but in your introduction you tell us, that to forbear complimenting, that definition belongs both to *yourself and the courteous reader*.

So that you must either allow, that you and your courteous readers are all savages, in an unenlightened state of nature, or else that the man you have described belongs to all orders of Christians.

Having shewn the weakness and folly of your apology, I proceed now to your more particular account of the *origin of moral virtue*.

You are pleased to impute its origin to *pride* alone, that having the same cause as fine clothes; we may wear as much, or as little, or as we please, without incurring any greater offence than a little variation in dress.

If *pride* be the only foundation of virtue, then the more vicious any one is, the more humble he ought to be esteemed; and he who is the most humble is at the greatest distance he can be placed from moral virtue. And a

perfect humility (which by most moralists has been reckoned a virtue) must, according to this account, render any one incapable of any virtue ; for such a one not only wants that which you make the only cause of virtue, but is possessed of the contrary quality.

Having carefully considered human nature, you have at last discovered, that *the moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride.*

You are so fond of this discovery, that you cannot help shewing us how you made it.

The first moralists or philosophers, say you, *thoroughly examined all the strength and frailty of our nature, and observing that none were either so savage, as not to be charmed with praise, or so despicable as patiently to bear contempt, justly concluded that flattery must be the powerful argument that could be used to human creatures.*<sup>1</sup>

What a graphical description is here ! One would think that you had been an eye-witness to all that passed, and that you had held the candle to those first philosophers when they were so carefully peeping into human nature. You do not love to dwell upon little matters, or else you could have told us the philosopher's name who first discovered this *flattery*, how long he looked before he found it, how he

<sup>1</sup> p. 29.

proved it to be agreeable to pride, what disputes happened upon the occasion, and how many ages of the world had passed before this consultation of the philosophers.

But, however, you pass on to more material points: *They*, say you, (that is the philosophers,) *making use of this bewitching engine, extolled the excellence of our nature above other animals. Having by this artful way of flattery insinuated themselves into the hearts of men, they began to instruct them in the notions of honour and shame;—they laid before them how unbecoming it was the dignity of such sublime creatures to be solicitous about gratifying those appetites which they had in common with brutes, &c.*

This you take to be a sufficient proof *that the moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride.*

I can go no further till I present you with a fine speculation of an *abstract thinker* upon the *origin of the erect posture of mankind.*

“It was his opinion, that the nearer we search into human nature, the more we shall be convinced, that walking upon our feet with our body erect was the *political offspring which flattery begot upon pride.*

“The first legislators, says he, having examined the strength and weakness of man’s body, they discovered that he was not so top-



heavy, but that he might stand upright on his feet; but the difficulty was, how to raise him up.

“Some philosopher, more sagacious than the rest, found out, that though man crept on the ground, yet he was made up of pride, and that if flattery took hold of that, he might easily be set on his legs.

“Making use of this bewitching engine, they extolled the excellence of his shape above other animals, and told him what a grovelling thing it was to creep on all four, like the meanest animals.

“Thus did these first philosophers shame poor man out of his natural state of creeping, and wheedled him into the dignity and honour of walking upright, to serve their own ambitious ends, and that they might have his hands to be employed in their drudgery.”

This gentleman, being deeply learned in the knowledge of human nature, has much the same curiosities concerning the organ of speech, and the first invention of truth, which he thinks, upon a strict research into nature, may very justly be ascribed to pride and flattery.

But to return to your history. The next thing your philosopher did was this :

*In order to introduce an emulation amongst men, they divided the whole species into two classes, vastly differing from one another. The one consisted of vile, grovelling*



wretches, which they said were the dross of their kind, and having only the shape of men, differed from brutes only in their outward figure ; but the other class of men were made up of high-spirited lofty creatures<sup>1</sup>.

Chronology and geography, I presume, are studies not polite enough for your attention, or else I suppose you would have told us the time when and the place where all this happened.

For it is material to know what the world was doing before these philosophers made this division ; whether before this there was any fear of God, any belief of a providence, any duty to parents, any sense of equity, any notions of faith, or any regard to truth.

For if the enquiry was about the origin of *seeing*, or *hearing*, and you should be ever so exact in telling me the manner how some cunning philosophers first brought that matter to bear, I should be very scrupulous about it, unless you told me the time when and the place where they met, what they were doing before, how they came thither, and how they knew when they were there.

Now there is just this same difficulty in your account of the *origin of moral virtue*.

For, let me tell you, sir, *moral virtue* came amongst men in the same manner as *seeing* and *hearing* came amongst them.

<sup>1</sup> p. 30.

Had there ever been a time when there was nothing of it in the world, it could no more have been introduced, than the faculties of *seeing* and *hearing* could have been contrived by men who were *blind* and *deaf*.

Were not the first principles and reasons of morality connatural to us, and essential to our minds, there would have been nothing for the moral philosophers to have improved upon.

Nor indeed can any art or science be formed, but in such matters as where Nature has taken the first steps herself, and shewn certain principles to proceed upon.

*Perspective* supposes an agreement in the different appearances of objects. *Music* supposes a confessed perception of various sounds, and *moral philosophy* supposes an acknowledged difference of Good and Evil.

Were we not all naturally *mathematicians* and *logicians*, there would be no such sciences; for science is only an improvement of those first principles or ways of thinking which Nature has given us.

Take away the mathematician's *postulata*, or those first elements and principles of reason, which are allowed by the common sense of mankind, and were philosophers even as cunning as yourself, they must give up all the science.

Do but suppose *all* to be invented, and

then it will follow that *nothing* could be invented in any science.

It is thus in all sciences: the rationality of our nature contains the first rules or principles, and it is the speculation of man that builds and enlarges upon them.

As the mathematician, seeing the acknowledged differences and proportions of lines and figures, proceeded upon them to enlarge men's knowledge in such matters; so the moral philosophers, seeing the acknowledged difference between Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, which the common reason of man consented to, they proceeded to enlarge and improve upon them.

So that their labours are but speculations and harangues upon those common principles of morality, which were as connatural to the reason of man, as the first principles of any other science.

*Moral philosophy* may be compared to *eloquence*; it is an improvement upon the common reason of man, as *eloquence* is an improvement upon speech.

Now should some *connoisseur* take it into his head to inquire into the *origin of speech*, and tell the world, "That once upon a time, some *orators*, seeing that man had something in his mouth by the movement of which he could make a particular sound, they told him of the dignity and honour of uttering such sounds,

and so through the pride of his nature taught the *animal* to speak, though in reality it was neither natural to him, nor any true excellence; but ambitious men flattered him into it, that he might be the fitter to go on their errands."

Should any profound thinker give this account of the *origin of speech*, you would have a right to say that he had stole the discovery from you, who have given us just the same false and ridiculous account of the *origin* of morality.

For it is full as reasonable to make eloquence the *origin* of forming *articulate sounds*, as to make the harangues or labours of moral philosophers the *origin of moral virtue*.

Could it be supposed that an understanding so *fine* as yours could be conveyed to your *descendants*, and that you should ever have a *grandson* as *wise* as yourself, it may be expected that he will be able to teach that generation of men that *seeing* was first introduced into the world by Sir Isaac Newton's treatise upon *optics*.

To enquire into the origin of moral virtue, is to enquire into the origin of *reason*, *truth*, and the *relations* of things.

And to fancy that some politicians contrived moral virtue, is to fancy that some politician contrived *reason* and *truth*, and invented the difference between one action and another.

There is nothing that began to be, but

what may be destroyed or cease to be ; but as truth and reason can never cease to be, so it implies a contradiction in terms for truth and reason ever to have had a beginning.

It is the same in moral virtue, which is *truth* and *reason* considered in relation to actions ; and the difference between one action and another is as immutable and eternal as the difference between one line and another, and can no more be destroyed.

As *things* are different by their own proper natures, independent of our wills, so *actions* have their own peculiar qualities from themselves, and not from our thoughts about them. In these immutable qualities of actions is founded the fitness and reasonableness of them, which we can no more alter, than we can change the proportions or relations of lines and figures.

And it is no more the *pride* of man that has made this difference between *actions*, than it is the *pride* of man that makes the difference between a *circle* and a *square*.

Moral virtue therefore, if considered in itself as the rule or law of intelligent beings, had *no origin* ; that is, there never was a time when it began to be ; but it is as much without beginning as truth and goodness, which are in their natures as eternal as God.

But moral virtue, if considered as the object of man's knowledge, began with the first



man, and is as natural to him as it is natural to man to think and perceive, or feel the difference between pleasure and pain.

For his rational nature as much implies a fitness to perceive a difference in actions as to right and wrong, as it implies a fitness to perceive a difference in things as to great and small, pleasing or painful.

It may now be enquired, whether this moral virtue be our *law*, and how it appears that we are under any obligations to behave ourselves according to this difference of *right* and *wrong* that appears in actions.

Now the reasonableness and fitness of actions themselves is a law to rational beings, and the sight of that reasonableness carries an obligation.

The different magnitude of things is a reason to us to acknowledge such difference; and he that affirms any thing contrary to the sight of his mind, offends against the law of his nature.

The different nature of *actions* is a reason for us to act according to such differences, and he who does any thing contrary to the sight of his mind in that respect, sins against the law of his nature.

Now that this is not an imaginary obligation, or a law fancied by moralists, may appear from hence; that this is a law to which even the Divine nature is subject; for God is necessarily



just and good, not from any external force, but from the excellence of justice and goodness. *Reason* is His law, because it is *reason*. That therefore which is a law to God because of its excellence, must surely be a *law* to all beings whom He has created capable of discerning that excellence. For if the reason or excellence of the thing be of sufficient force to determine the action of God, certainly it ought not to be thought too little to determine us in our actions.

Nor can that be said to be an imaginary speculative law to intelligent beings, which is an inviolable law to the most perfect intelligent nature.

2dly. It is the will of God that makes moral virtue our law, and obliges us to act reasonably.

If you ask how this will of God appears, I must beg leave at present only to suppose that God is of infinite justice, and goodness, and truth; and then the thing proves itself: for such a God must necessarily will that all his creatures, in their several proportions, be just, and good, and true.

Few mathematical demonstrations conclude stronger than this. There is only one objection to be made against it, which is to suppose that God is neither just nor true.

If rather than yield, you will put the *Epicurean* upon me, and say that God may disregard us, and neither will one way nor the other; it

may be answered, that this is inconsistent with the idea of God just laid down : for a God of infinite goodness and truth can no more fail to will goodness and truth in *every instance*, than an infinite being can fail to be present in every place, or an omnipotent being be deficient in any acts of power. So that it is absolutely necessary to say, either that God is not of infinite goodness and truth, or to allow that he requires all his creatures in their several capacities to be just, and true, and good.

Here, sir, is the noble and divine origin of moral virtue; it is founded in the immutable relations of things, in the perfections and attributes of God, and not in the *pride* of man, or the craft of cunning politicians.

As the reasons and obligations to moral virtue have always been in being, so has mankind always had sight of them; it being as essential and natural for a rational being to perceive these differences or actions, as it is for an extended being to occupy space.

And the creation of a rational nature as much implies a sight of the reasonableness of things, as the creation of an extended being implies its possession of so much space.

Matter of fact also supports this observation ; for history tells us of no age or country where men have not agreed to ascribe justice, goodness, and truth, to the Supreme Being.

Now this shews that they always not only knew what goodness, justice, and truth were, but also that they took them to be such excellent qualities as ought to be ascribed to the highest and best Being.

How monstrous is it, therefore, to impute these fine moral virtues to the contrivance of politicians, when all ages of the world have agreed to ascribe them to God, and number them amongst his glorious attributes!

God is just; therefore there is such a thing as justice, independent of the will and contrivance of man, is a way of reasoning that cannot be refuted.

It is in vain to say, that there may be a divine justice and goodness, and yet what we call goodness and justice amongst men may be only a human contrivance.

For to this it may be answered, that we cannot ascribe any thing to God of which we have not some conception ourselves. Did we not perceive some degrees of wisdom, we could not call him *all-wise*; did we not feel power, and understand what it is, we could not ascribe *omnipotence* to God. For our idea of God is only formed by adding *infinite* to every perfection that we have any knowledge of.

So that had we not from the rationality of our nature as plain a sight of justice, goodness, and truth, as we have of *power*, *existence*, or

any thing else, we could not attribute them to God.

That we are rational beings, is as plain as that we have bodies and bodily senses. As there is no man so refined and elevated but gives frequent proof that he is subject also to instincts and passions; so there is no one so addicted to an animal life as to shew no signs of an higher principle within him.

It is this rationality of our nature that makes us both capable of, and obliged to practise, moral virtue, and brings us into a kind of society with God and all other intelligent beings.

For our reason gives us a share in that common light which all intelligent beings enjoy, and by making us partakers of the same things, so far makes us of one society.

By our reason we know some truths which God and all intelligent beings know, and apprehend some perfections, and different qualities in things and actions, which all intelligent beings apprehend.

Now by being let into this region of truth, by being able to see some truths which God also sees, and to know some perfections which he also knows, we are as plainly declared to be rational beings, and that reason is one law of our nature, as the principles of flesh and blood shew us to be animals, and subject to the instincts of an animal life.

For how weak is it to suppose that the *animal* life should be the foundation of laws of nature, so as to make it fit for us to act agreeable to its wants and desires; and that the *rationality* of our *beings*, which is, in some degree, a likeness to God, should be the foundation of no laws of nature, so as to make it fit for us to act suitable to its perfection and happiness!

The short is this, *truth* and *reason* is the law by which God acts; man is, in some degree, made a partaker of that truth and reason; therefore it is a law to him also. The more we act according to Order, Truth, and Reason, the more we make ourselves like to God, who is truth and reason itself.

This is the strong and immoveable foundation of *moral virtue*, having the same certainty as the attributes of God.

Away then, I beseech you, with your idle and profane fancies about the *origin of moral virtue*. For once turn your eyes towards heaven, and dare but own a just and good God, and then you have owned the true origin of religion and moral virtue.

Thus much will, I presume, be thought sufficient to vindicate the excellence and obligations of *moral virtue* from the false and impious accounts you have given of its origin.

I proceed to consider, in the next place,



some other methods that are made use of to render *moral virtue* odious and contemptible.

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## SECTION II.

THE most boasted objection against the reality of virtue which is urged by men, who appropriate the knowledge of human nature to themselves, is this, that no action is performed by us through a *love of goodness*, or upon a rational principle of virtue; but that it is *complexion, natural temper, education, pride, shame*, or some other blind impulse that moves us in all our actions that have the appearance of virtue. Thus a man who relieves an object of compassion, only gratifies his *commiserating temper*; he is subject to *pity, which is a frailty of our natures, and of which the weakest minds have generally the greatest share, as may be seen in women and children*<sup>1</sup>. Again, *the humblest man alive, say you, must confess, that the reward of a virtuous action, which is the satisfaction that ensues upon it, consists in a certain pleasure he procures to himself in contemplating his own worth; which pleasure, together with the occasion of it, are as certain signs of pride, as looking pale and trembling*

<sup>1</sup> p. 42.

*at any imminent danger are the symptoms of fear*<sup>2</sup>.

Now, sir, if this be a true account of the *humblest man alive*, then, by the rule of contraries, this must be a true account of the *proudest man alive*, that the satisfaction he enjoys in being so, consists in a certain pleasure he procures to himself by contemplating his own vileness.

This accurate description you have given us of the *pleasure of the humblest man alive*, must be owing to such a feeling sense as the *blind man* had of *light*, who being asked what it was like, answered, that it was like the *sound of a trumpet*.

But to consider this charge against human virtue, that it is nothing but education, natural temper, or complexion; this being so laboured a point, I shall state the whole matter as clearly as I can.

1st. It is granted that an action is only then virtuous when it is performed, because it is agreeable to reason, and those laws which God requires us to observe.

Now this virtue is man's duty, not as a task that is imposed upon him, but as it is the only practice that is the natural pleasure and proper good of his being.

Virtue having that natural fitness to a ra-

<sup>2</sup> p. 43.

tional soul that fine sights have to the eye, or harmonious sounds to the ear.

A rational being is in order, in its right state and frame, when it is acting reasonably.

The infinite goodness of God makes him infinitely happy, and the perfection of every being is its happiness; and the greater and more perfect the virtue of any one is, the more perfect is his happiness.

Now it is here to be observed, that an action is not less virtuous, or loses any of its excellency, because the soul is delighted and made happy by it; for it is the very nature of virtue to produce such effects, and it shews the rectitude of the soul when it can act virtuously with delight, and feel its happiness in so doing.

This is being virtuous upon principle, and through a *love of goodness*; for goodness is loved for itself, when it is loved for what it is, the true good and proper delight of a rational being. *am. b. g.*

Now will any one say that there is no excellence in virtue, that it is mere *nature* and *temper*, because it is so agreeable, so proper to our rational natures? Then let him say there is no excellence in the goodness and justice of God, because they are so suitable to his nature, and constitute his happiness.

Granting therefore that virtue was its own reward, as it elevates and perfects the soul, and

keeps it in a state of right enjoyment, it would not be the less reasonable on that account.

For happiness is the only reasonable *end* of every being.

An action is not good, or virtuous, because it is *self-denial*, but because it is according to duty ; and he who through long habits of goodness has made the practice of virtue to have less of self-denial in it, is the most virtuous man.

Now it is no objection against the *reality* of goodness, that as rational beings we are *naturally* and *complexionally* disposed to practise and delight in it ; or that this natural disposition may by exercise, meditation, and habit, be heightened and increased.

For custom, habit, and natural temper, are proper assistances of our most virtuous actions, and cannot be said to make them less reasonable, unless it be a fault or imperfection to be habitually and strongly disposed to goodness.

Thus much therefore is true of us considered only as *rational beings* ; that we must even in that state be by nature and temper formed to perceive pleasure, from some particular ways of acting ; and that the very excellence of our natures consists in a fitness and disposition for virtuous actions, which the more we improve and strengthen by meditation and habit, the more reasonable we make ourselves.

It has pleased God in the formation of man so to unite this rational nature to a body of flesh and blood, that they shall generally act together; and that the soul shall as well be influenced by bodily instincts, and motions of the blood and spirits, as by its own thoughts and reflections.

Thus, a delightful thought conceived ever so secretly in the mind, shall, at its first conception, have the blood and spirits join in the pleasure.

So that every right judgment of the mind, every proper aversion, or regular love, has as much the concurrence of the blood and spirits, as if they were the only agents.

The body being thus visibly an agent in all that we do, has made some weak heads imagine that we are nothing else but body; as from the same want of thought some have concluded that there is nothing besides the material world, because nothing else is obvious to their eyes.

The soul being thus united to the body, no act of the man is less reasonable or virtuous, because it has the concurrence of the blood and spirits; for this was the intention of the union, that a creature of such a form should exert its instincts and passions in conformity to reason.

For instance, suppose any one should meditate upon the attributes and perfections of God, till the great idea had raised and warmed his



*An immediate nature* *San-*  
*is asserted*  
spirits; though the reflection is then supported by the agitation of bodily spirits, yet the meditation is not less religious, or less devout, or reasonable, because the heat of bodily spirits assisted in it.

Suppose any one should so often reflect upon an eternal state of darkness and separation from God, till his blood and spirit join in increasing the horror; such an horror would not be less reasonable, because the body joined in keeping it up.

The mechanical influence which our spirits and temperament have upon our actions does not take away from the reasonableness of them, any more than the rational frame of our minds, which is naturally disposed to acquiesce in the reason of things, destroys the reasonableness of actions.

As it would be no excellence in a pure thinking being to be equally inclined to truth or falsehood; so it would add no merit to such a mixed nature as ours is, if our bodily temperaments were neither more or less inclined to, or delighted with, one sort of actions than another.

Let us only suppose that a rational soul and an animal nature were united to act in a state of personality.

It cannot be that the reasonableness of its actions should be impaired by the body's appearing to have a share in them, because it does

not act according to its nature, unless the body does concur; and in such a mixed being it is no more required that its actions should be performed abstractly by pure reason, than it is allowed that its motions should be merely animal.

Yet this is the false judgment which men who are not the greatest friends of virtue make, because the influence of the animal nature is visible in the best of men; and because such enquirers generally converse intimately only with the worst, they rashly conclude against *all* force of principle, and deny reason to have *any* share in our actions.

From what has been said we may easily support the *reality* of virtue from all the objections of these *critics* upon human nature.

For granting the force of education, the power of custom, and the influence of our bodily instincts and tempers; yet nothing can thence be concluded against the share that reason and principle are required to have in our actions.

For both reason and religion direct us to use the influence and assistance of all these helps; and consequently they no more lessen or take from the reality of virtuous actions, when we are assisted by them, than *fasting* or *prayer* make our piety less excellent, because it was assisted by them.

And it is as suitable to our natures to strengthen and establish our virtue, by edu-

cation, custom, complexion, and bodily instincts, as it is suitable to religion to improve and heighten it by fasting and prayer.

And he who says that such or such actions have no principle of virtue or religion in them, because they are made easy by education, temper, and practice, thinks as weakly as if he should affirm that such actions have no reality of principle in them, because they are the effects of meditation and habits of attention; for good habits of body no more lessen the excellence of virtue than good habits of mind.

An action is virtuous because it is an obedience to reason and the laws of God, and does not cease to be so, because the body is either formed by use, or created by disposition, easy and ready for the performance of it.

A good education would be a sin, if the benefit that is received from it, or the facility of performing good actions, took away from their goodness.

Nay, all habits of virtue would, upon this foot, be blameable, because such habits must be supposed to have rendered both body and mind more ready and exact in goodness.

All these absurdities necessarily follow from this argument, that there is no virtuous principle in our good actions, because custom, education, temper, and complexion, have their share in them.

2ndly. This objection against the reality of virtue is rather a calumny than any just charge against it.

For as it is as certain that we think and reason, as that we are subject to bodily instincts and habits, nothing can prove that our reason and reflection do not principally concur in any action, but the impossibility of it. He therefore that would prove that my mind does not act upon a principle of reason, where he thinks that temper or complexion may carry me through it, can never prove it till he can shew that there was no principle of reason, no proper motive, no precept of duty to move me to it; for if there be a plain reason in the thing, if there be a precept of duty to excite my mind, as well as a natural disposition in my temper to perform the action, it is impossible for the most penetrating genius to prove that my temperament had a greater share in the action than the reason of my mind; and consequently this objection is a mere calumny, and an ill-natured suspicion, which can never prove itself to be justly made.

Now, that reason is the chief principle in the performance of good actions, may, in some degree, be learnt from hence, that reasonable and wise actions never occasion any sorrow or repentance in the mind; but, on the contrary, in violent actions, where the fermentation of

the blood and spirits may be supposed to have blindly hurried on the action, that fermentation is no sooner abated, but there arises a pain in the mind, and reason condemns the action; which condemnation chiefly consists in this, that reason had not the guidance of it; which is a plain confession that it is the way of our nature to have reason govern the instincts and motions of the spirits, and that she shrinks and is uneasy at those actions where she was not the principal agent.

If therefore actions only satisfy and content us by being approved by our reason, it is a manifest proof that our reason is the principal agent in our good actions.

Nor will it be any objection to this to say that many people are satisfied with false notions of virtue and religion; for this only shews that the principle of reason may be weak, and of very little discerning force in some people; but still it is their faculty of reason, such as it is, that gives them peace when it presides; and it is living contrary to reason that gives them pain, as it gives pain to others who enjoy a more enlightened mind.

If the religious Turk abhors the abomination of wine, it cannot be said that such abhorrence is only the effect of temper, bodily instincts, and custom, unless it could be shewn that he would equally abhor it, though he



was fully persuaded that Mahomet was a cheat.

From this account of human nature we may be able to reject all those reproaches which are cast upon virtue and religion, as if they were never founded upon any rational principle, but were the casual blind effects of custom, education, temper, or complexion.

1st. As it appears that in our rational natures we are naturally and complexionally formed to practise and delight in reasonable actions, and that such a tendency of temper or nature towards virtue no more lessens the excellence of it than the rectitude of God's nature takes away the excellence of his actions.

2ndly. That actions are not less virtuous for being suitable to any disposition, whether natural or acquired, than for being suitable to the reason of the mind.

3rdly. That *education, custom, habits, complexion, &c.* are so far from taking away the reasonableness of our actions, that we could not be said to act reasonably, unless we endeavoured to make a greater progress in virtue by their assistance.

4thly. That it is impossible, even in those actions where *custom, education, complexion, and habit*, seem to be in full power, for any one to prove that reason and principle have not the greatest share in them.

✓ 6. 9. 10

5thly. That peace of mind, which attends our good actions, is a plain proof of the power which our reason had in the performance of them.

To come now to a particular instance or two.

1st. Philo's *charity* and *compassion* is no virtue, you say, because it is mere complexion and temper : he gratifies his *pity*, and acts in conformity to his blood and spirits.

Now this is so far from proving that he has not the virtue of charity, that it might be urged as a proof of his having it.

For his body is in that disposition that it should be, supposing that his mind had been long exercised and endued with habits of charity ; it gives that further pleasure in charitable acts which the right turn of the instincts, and blood, and spirits, should give to the mind in every virtuous action.

For, as I have observed, man is then in his best state, when the course of the blood and spirits act in concurrence with his reason ; so that when my body, with its *instincts* and *motions*, joins with the right judgments of my mind, what I so perform has all the perfection that a human creature is able to exert.

This complexion therefore, or bodily disposition towards charitable acts, is so far from implying that therefore the mind has no share in the action, that were the mind in its best

state, and in its full power (as at first created), it would use a greater and more constant concurrence of all bodily tempers in the performance of its duty.

So that when complexion or bodily temperament readily join in the performance of good actions, this is so far from implying any defect of principle, or want of rational motive, that it shews, in some degree, the remains of that primitive rectitude of body and mind before the *fall*.

2ndly. To say that Philo's charity is mere complexion, is a calumny and groundless accusation; it is a suspicion as ill-grounded as if I was to suspect that a man had no pride in his mind, because there appeared an haughtiness in his carriage; or no humility within, because of a natural lowliness without: it is a suspicion thus founded against all the appearances of truth, and is forced to make those the proofs of the absence of a thing, which are the natural signs of its presence.

And as it is thus unreasonable, so is it utterly impossible that it should ever justify itself.

For seeing it is not only possible, but natural for this complexional disposition to act in conformity to the internal principle of the mind, it can never be proved that it does not.

It can never be proved that reason and

religion have not a greater share in Philo's charity, than his complexion. How far some precept of religion, some principle of reason may influence his mind, cannot be known by the most sagacious philosopher; therefore the charge against his charity, as the mere effect of complexion, must be always ill-natured, unjust, and groundless.

Further, granting that Philo was complexionally disposed to pity and compassion, even before he could be supposed to act upon a principle of virtue and religion, yet even this supposition will make nothing against it afterwards.

For will any one argue that a man can never fear, love, or hate, upon principles of reason, because children fear, love, and hate, before reason is of any force to direct them?

Yet this is as wise as to suppose that a man's complexion is never made to concur with a principle of reason, because such complexion appeared before reason could be supposed of sufficient power to guide it.

As to what you say, that *Pity is as much a frailty of our nature as anger, pride, &c. : that the weakest minds have generally the greatest share of it, for which reason none are more compassionate than women and children*<sup>1</sup>:

Two things may be observed: first, the

<sup>1</sup> p. 42.

inconsistency of this assertion with the rest of your book. *asserted.*

Here you derive the compassion of women from a supposed *weakness of mind*; which supposes that their *tempers* depend upon their minds, and are subject to them, and influenced by them; though in this very page you make *pity* to be only an *impulse of nature*, and it is your chief design throughout your book to shew that all our tempers and passions are mere mechanism and *constitution*, founded only in the temper and tone of our bodily spirits.

So that, according to your deep philosophy, *pity* is only an impulse of nature and bodily temper; yet women are more pitiful than men, because they have (as you suppose) *weaker minds*.

That is, their minds, because *weak*, have a power over their tempers, and form their dispositions; but men's minds, being *strong*, have no such power.

To what temper of mind such philosophy as this is to be imputed, need not be observed.

2ndly. To say that women have the *weakest minds*, is saying more than you are able to prove. If they are more inclined to compassion, through a tenderness of nature, it is so far from being a weakness of their minds, that it is a right judgment, assisted, or made more easy, by a happy tenderness of their constitutions.



And it is owing, perhaps, to this *make* of their spirits, that they are commonly more affected with the truths of religion than the generality of men are.

When our minds are once softened, by whatever cause it is, we are generally in the best disposition for the impressions of religion; so that *pity* is so far from being *as much a frailty* as *pride* and *anger*, that they are as different in their effects as a *heart of flesh* and a *heart of stone*, which holy scripture makes as different as a *blessing* and a *curse*.

But to return (if this be a digression) to my subject.

Let us now further suppose that Philo's charity is greatly owing to his nature and complexion; that the quality of his spirits began the disposition, and helped to recommend this virtue to the mind; yet may such a virtue be as truly rational and religious as if it had been let into the mind any other way.

*Sickness, poverty, and distress*, have a natural tendency to correct our follies, and convert our minds towards our true good. These conditions of life may make it as easy for a man to be *humble* and *compassionate* as any bodily complexion whatever; yet is such *humility* and *compassion* not to be esteemed void of principle or reason, because such causes contributed towards them, and led the mind into them.

For the mind is acting according to the truest principles of reason and religion when it makes advantage of these external helps, and turns *ease* and *pain*, *sickness* and *health*, into occasional causes of greater piety.

Nor is it any more a diminution of the reality of Philo's charity, to say that bodily temper first prepared and inclined his mind towards it, than it is a diminution of the reality of any one's *repentance*, to say that it was some misfortune or cross accident that first disposed and fitted his mind for it.

David said, (without fear of destroying the reality of his piety), *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*

Now if actions or ways of life may be good, though afflictions contributed towards them, surely they may be equally good, though some bodily tempers proved in some degree the occasions of them.

And it is as consistent with true and real virtue to owe its rise to some bodily constitution or temper, as it is consistent with solid and substantial piety to owe its beginning to some particular calamity or action of God's providence.

But to proceed: It is further objected that Philo's charity must be *mere complexion*, and not virtue; for if it were virtue, he would not allow himself in the neglect of other duties.

This, again, is a false conclusion ; for a man may perform one duty upon a principle of virtue and sense of duty, and yet, through mistake or negligence, be deficient in others.

Such great judges of human nature should consider, that even in worldly affairs a man does not always act up to the same principle in everything he does.

Will any one say that Avarus does not consider gain when he is making bargains, because at some other times he seems not to value expense ?

If not, why then must Philo be looked upon as not *at all* influenced by a sense of duty in his acts of charity, because at some other times and occasions he seems not to be governed by it.

Our present state is a state of great weakness and imperfection, and our reason, weak as it is, has a thousand impediments to hinder and divert its force. In the affairs of civil life we are neither perfectly wise nor wholly foolish, and we are almost the same men in the things that relate to God. In some instances reason and religion get more power over us, and guide us under a sense of duty ; whilst in other parts of our life it may be very apparent that reason has a less share in our actions.

But to conclude that reason, or a principle of virtue, does not influence us in any part of our behaviour, because it does not act equally

and constantly in every other part of our lives, is as absurd as to affirm that we do not *think* at all in any thing that we do, because we do not *think* with the same exactness or attention in every thing that is done by us.

If *Philo* lives in the neglect or violation of some duties, this shews that he is a weak, imperfect man; but it does not shew that he is the *same* weak and imperfect man, and as devoid of any principle of virtue, when he does his duty, as when he neglects it: for it is as possible for him to be charitable upon a principle of duty, and yet fail in some other respects, as it is possible for a man to use his reason in some things, and not in others; or to reason right in some points, and yield to folly in others.

So that to impute actions seemingly virtuous solely to natural *temper*, or *complexion*, or some other blind motive, because the man is not uniform in his life, is groundless and absurd: all that can with any truth be affirmed of such a man is this, that he is not uniform in his actions, and that, through some mistake or negligence, he is not so careful of his duty in some respects as in others.

Our *understanding* and *reason*, even in matters of mere speculation, are well nigh as weak and inconstant as in points of duty and conscience.

Few systems of philosophy but obtrude

some errors upon us with as much assurance as they affirm the truth : Descartes asserted a *plenum* ; Sir Isaac Newton has proved a *vacuum*.

Now, will any one say that it was not the *reason* or *understanding* of Descartes that demonstrated so many solid truths, because he yielded to falsity and error in the doctrine of a *plenum* ? Yet it would be much more reasonable to affirm this, in matters of mere speculation, than to affirm that, in points of practice and duty, a man is *in no actions* governed by *reason* and *principle*, because in *some* instances he acts weakly, and not according to reason.

For, produce but the true reason why a philosopher may be said to proceed in some speculations according to strict reason and truth, and yet hold some tenets contrary to them, and then you will shew that it is possible, nay, highly probable, that a man may, in some points of duty, act upon a principle of reason and virtue, though in some things he may swerve from them.

There is, I acknowledge, a great difference in bodily temperaments, so that one man may be born with better dispositions for the practice of some virtues than others, yet it is reason within that is the chief principle that actuates all of them ; for the *finest spirits* are things



as blind and senseless of themselves as the *hands* and *feet*, or the grosser parts of the body.

*Wit* and *understanding* depend much upon bodily temperaments; yet who is so weak as to imagine that therefore the reason of the mind has no share in arts and sciences?

It is the same in *virtue*, or at least, as to some particular virtues; there may be a kind disposition in the animal spirits to produce them, but it is great weakness to suppose that reason and judgment have no part in them.

It is impossible for our stinted capacities to explain or calculate the *exact* powers that are to be attributed to our souls and bodies in the performance of actions, because we have no clear ideas of them; but we know enough to affirm the united operation of both, and to shew that he reasons falsely who would ascribe an action wholly to the body, because it appears to have some share in it; because, supposing it to take its rise wholly from *reason*, the union of the soul and body requires that the body should appear to have the same part in the production of the action.

There are nothing more various, imperceptible, or more out of our sight, than the motives of human actions. We know no more how *arguments* and *opinions* act upon the mind, or how far they contribute to our *choice*, than we can

tell how far the *air*, and how far the *sun*, operates in the growth of plants.

When a freethinker asserts that our *religious belief and persuasions are not at all the causes of human actions*, he proceeds upon as good grounds as if he had said that *air is not at all* the cause of the circulation of the blood.

For it is as easy to shew that *air* has no influence upon our bodies, as that *reason* and *opinions* have no power over our minds.

And it is more possible to tell how far the *fluids*, and how far the *solids*, in an human body, contribute to bodily action, than it is to affirm how far *opinions* and *judgments*, and how far *temper* and *complexion*, operate in human actions.

Nay, these gentlemen themselves, to make their philosophy still more ridiculous, are frequently wondering at the strange and monstrous *contradictions* which they think they discover in human nature.

As if they should say, that finding human nature to be *unaccountable*, they therefore take upon them to give *certain* and *positive* accounts of its manner of acting.

I shall be pardoned for insisting so long upon this article, because it is that on which some celebrated *wits* have spent so much pains, to the prejudice of religion and morality. It is not easy to imagine the fatal effects that

Mr Bayle's and Esprit's writings have had upon people's minds, by denying the power of *reason* and *religion*, and ascribing all human actions to *complexion*, *natural temper*, &c.

It is an easy thing to be a *wit*, and a *philosopher*, if you will but write against religion and virtue; for I need not say all arguments, but all fancies, are admitted as demonstrations on that side; and the bolder steps you take, the surer you are of being esteemed a *genius*.

Had Mr Bayle filled his books with the most useful, noble truths, he had not had half so many admirers, as for one single sentence which the most thoughtless rake might have said through the mere assurance of his own extravagancies.

Speaking of *fornication*, *I question*, says he, *whether one man in a hundred is clear of the guilt*.

Could he have said a more extravagant thing, that had reflected more upon morality and the power of religion, he had still been more admired. It is thus that Mr Bayle and Esprit have purchased the esteem and increased the numbers of infidels and libertines.

These gentlemen are dead, and their ashes safe, if the death of men implies no more than the fall of leaves.

What reasons you have to appear in the same cause of immorality, or what security you

have against the power of God, is, I dare say, not known to yourself.

Infidelity and irreligion have few topics for reflection ; they have not so much as one argument on their side.

You can no more shew that you are not immortal, than you can shew what was doing before the creation of the world.

To fancy that all expires with the body, is as well supported as if you was to fancy that there are no beings but what are visible to your eyes. To suppose that man will never be called to an account, is as much to be depended upon, as if you supposed that there will be nothing in being a thousand years hence.

Yet these are the *strong foundations* of infidelity and profaneness ; these are the *solid principles* upon which great *philosophers* establish deluded (or as they call themselves) *free-thinkers*.

A revelation from God, that justifies itself from the creation of the world ; that tells you every truth that a wise man would be glad to hear ; that is supported with all the authority that an omnipotent God can give ; that is confirmed with all the assurance that human testimony can afford, is of no weight against a few bold assertions of weak mortals, who exceed their fellow-creatures only in arrogance and presumption.

## SECTION III.

ONE would imagine, by what has already passed, that you had sufficiently vented your passion upon moral virtue, and that you had hardly any more arrows to draw against it ; but you proceed to shew us that however you may fail in argument, you will never be wanting in inclination to attack it.

You set yourself with an air of satisfaction, as if morality and religion lay at your feet, *to examine into the pulchrum and honestum of the ancients ; that is, to enquire whether there be any real excellence or worth in things, a pre-eminence of one thing above another*<sup>1</sup>.

And to shew that there is no such thing as any real worth or excellence in things or actions, but that all is mere whim and fancy, you proceed thus :

*In the works of nature worth and excellence are as uncertain. How whimsical is the florist ! sometimes the tulip, sometimes the auricula, shall engross his esteem. What mortal can decide which is the handsomest, abstract from the mode in being, to wear great buttons or small ones*<sup>2</sup>.

*In morals, say you, there is no greater certainty*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> p. 373.<sup>2</sup> p. 377.<sup>3</sup> p. 379.



So that, according to your philosophy, he who prefers equity to injustice is but like him that chooses a *great button* rather than a *small* one; and he who prefers fidelity to falseness, as whimsical as the florist who admires the *auricula* more than the *tulip*.

Now if there be only this difference between *actions*, then there can be no greater difference between *agents*; the best of men can only excel the vilest of their race as a *tulip* may excel an *auricula*.

Nay, if truth and falsehood be no otherwise different from one another than as one button differs from another, then it must follow that there can be no greater difference between the author of the one and the author of the other.

Now, the religion of our country tells us that God is *truth*, and the devil the author of *lies*.

This, sir, you see is the direct, immediate blasphemy of your notions, and not drawn from them by any distant or remote consequences.

And if I should ask you why one should be worshipped rather than the other, I should puzzle your profound philosophy as much as if I asked you which was the finest flower; for you cannot tell me that one of these beings is really good, and the other really evil, and yet maintain that there is no real goodness in truth, nor any real evil in lies and falsehood.

It is utterly impossible to answer this question, without giving up your *uncertainty in morals*, and allowing that there is something certain and immutable in the worth and excellence of things and actions.

Should any one charge you with the grossest villanies and most flagrant immoralities that ever were committed by man, you could have no more pretence to be angry at the imputation than if he had said you was particularly fond of little buttons.

To proceed: *which is the best religion*, say you, *is a question that has caused more mischief than all other questions together*<sup>1</sup>.

Religion never comes in your way but it puts you in a passion; though I dare say you never had any harm by it in your life. This is a heavy charge upon religion, and upon the best religion, for that is it which is enquired after. You charge a great deal of mischief to this enquiry after the best religion, on purpose to enhance, I suppose, your own merit, that you may appear to do a more public good, who endeavour to destroy the very idea of it.

But as mischievous as you reckon this enquiry to be, I am of another opinion, taken from him who made the enquiry necessary, who is God himself.

*Thou shalt have no other God besides me,*

<sup>1</sup> p. 379.

was setting up the best religion ; and *thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, &c.* was a determination against *paganism*. Now I look upon the best religion to be a matter of great moment, because God has commanded it ; and take the enquiry after it to be well authorised, because God has forbid all false worship.

If you like it the worse for having this authority, and should be better pleased with religion, if it was some politician's invention, I shall only say, that you are fonder of cheats than I am.

Again, I do not allow myself to be angry at the enquiry after the best religion, because I find that our blessed Saviour came into the world to teach men the best religion, and with the highest rewards and punishments to persuade men to seek after and embrace it. *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* And again, *Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

This convinces me, that the enquiry after the best religion is the noblest, the most happy, and beneficial of all other, because it is an enquiry after eternal happiness : but since you take it to have done more mischief than all other enquiries, you know now where to charge it ; you know who it was that sent twelve apostles,

endued with resistless power, to persuade all the nations of the world to enquire after, and receive the one best religion. “*Ask it, say you, (i. e. which is the best religion) at Peking, at Constantinople, at Rome, and you will receive three distinct answers, extremely different from one another, yet all of them equally positive and peremptory. Christians are well assured of the falsity of the Pagan and Mahometan superstitions; but enquire of the several sects they are divided into, which is the true church of Christ, and all of them will tell you it is theirs*<sup>1</sup>.

Then comes your golden conclusion. *It is manifest, then, that the hunting after this pulchrum and honestum, is not much better than a wild-goose chase, &c.*

Here I observe that, very consistently indeed with yourself, having rejected all moral virtue and natural religion, you treat revelation in the same manner. Christianity and paganism are put upon the same foot, and the enquiry which is the best, esteemed no better than a *wild-goose chase, &c.* Is this declaration of yours the effect of a serious enquiry into the merits of different religions? That cannot be; it reflects too much upon so fine an understanding as yours to suppose that you could ever have been seriously *chasing of wild geese.*

<sup>1</sup> p. 379.

The acuteness of your parts must have always prevented the enquiry. You knew, I suppose, *ab origine*, from your cradle, that there was no God, or you could not have been always so clear about the insignificance of any religion. For if there be a God, it is more than probable that he is to be worshipped, and it is hardly to be supposed that all ways of worship are equally acceptable to him.

You represent the enquiry after the best religion as a mere *wild-goose chase*, because, if the question is put at Peking, Constantinople, or amongst the various sects of Christians, all of them claim the only true worship.

Now, sir, I will remove the question from the disciples and followers to the authors of these religions. You shall put the question thus, Ask Jesus, ask Mahomet, ask some Pagan impostor, and you will receive three distinct answers, extremely different from one another, and yet equally positive and peremptory.

Will you stand to your conclusion here, that therefore it is madness to concern ourselves more about the one than the other?

Is there any creature so absurd as to think this an argument against Christ, or that the enquiry after him is folly, because there was one Mahomet called for disciples?

Yet the argument is full as just and cogent against Christ himself as against the religion



which he has instituted ; for if the religion of Christ and that of Mahomet have nothing to distinguish them, and Christianity is to be ridiculed and despised, because there is such a religion as Mahometism, then it undeniably follows, that Christ, when on earth, might be justly rejected, because there have been other persons who have pretended to come from God.

This argument of yours (if it proves any thing) proves it impossible that there ever should be any revelation or religion from God, which mankind would be obliged to receive, so long as there were either wicked spirits or wicked men in the world. For evil spirits and evil men will have evil designs, and will oppose the wisdom and providence of God, in setting up ways of religion suitable to their own tempers and designs. But according to your argument, no religion has any pretence to our regard, when once it is opposed ; nor need we trouble our heads about the truth of any, because there is more than one that lays claim to it, which is as good sense as if you was to affirm that a *lie* was a demonstration that there was no such thing as *truth*.

Whereas the very possibility of a false religion implies the possibility of a true one, as much as falsehood implies the possibility of truth, or wrong supposes right.

The wisest speech therefore that you can make to your sagacious followers is this :

“Gentlemen, I would not have you to eat or drink, because physicians differ very much about diet, and poisons are generally conveyed that way ; nor would I have you take any money, because there is counterfeit coin in the world.

“There are a great many false accounts of things ; therefore you need not, nay, ought not, to trouble yourselves about any that are true.

“You may laugh at David, when he says, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work* ; because there is a contrary opinion, *a fool that hath said in his heart, There is no God.*

“You need not regard Christianity or its divine institution, because there are other religions at Peking and Constantinople ; nor need you worship the true God, because in Egypt they worshipped leeks and onions ; nay, you need not hold that there is any true God, because there are people who have invented false deities.

“When any history is urged upon you, you may answer, that of Robinson Crusoe is called a *true* account ; or if any one pretends to be *positive* on the side of virtue, you may confute his arrogance by saying, it can never be proved that the *auricula* exceeds the *tulip*.

“These are strong and short maxims, which will support you against the wisdom of all ages; they confute whole volumes of prophets and apostles with a word speaking.

“These are doctrines that require no study or application, and you may believe them to be proper by their fitness for use. You may drink, debauch, eat, and sleep as you please, without hindering your progress in these doctrines. Luxury and wantonness will improve your readiness; and your very dulness will make you more acute.

“Nay, the more you sink into sensuality and the animal life, the more you will feel and relish the truth of these sentiments. Though you are to fly from all appearance of truth, and avoid all concern about any religion, as you would avoid the folly of *chasing of wild geese*; yet you must remember that you are my scholars: for I am an *abstract thinker*, and in these my abstract speculations you must be my diligent and dutiful scholars. Though Christianity may be despised, because other religions are set up against it, yet you must value me the more for being contrary to the wisest men of all ages in the world.

“Though there is nothing certain or valuable in religious truths, though moral virtue is the *offspring* of pride, the *invention* of philosophers, and all mere whim and fancy; yet my specula-

tions having the utmost contrariety to all that is virtuous, moral, or religious, you may safely put your whole trust and confidence in them."

This is the best speech that you can possibly make to your deluded followers; and I dare say, if your principles would allow of greater stupidity or dulness, you would not be without a party, who, to avoid salvation, would join with an enemy to virtue, merely for the sake of his cause.

The infidelity of the present age is very great, and shews such a contempt of sacred things, as was hardly ever heard of before.

If one enquires into the grounds of it, it seems founded on such an implicit faith reposed in men of wanton and sensual minds, as is looked upon to be mean and slavish, when yielded to the highest evidence in matters of the last moment.

To believe Moses and the prophets, is ridiculed, because it is *believing*; but to be a slave to a wanton infidel, and blindly swear into his opinions, is glorious and manly, because it is *free-thinking*.

*Deists* and *freethinkers* are generally considered as *unbelievers*; but upon examination, they will appear to be men of the most resigned and implicit faith in the world; they would believe *transubstantiation*, but that it implies a believing in God; for they never re-

sign their reason, but when it is to yield to something that opposes salvation.

For the *Deist's* creed has as many articles as the *Christian's*, and requires a much greater suspension of our reason to believe them. So that if to believe things upon no authority, or without any reason, be an argument of credulity, the *freethinker* will appear to be the most easy, credulous creature alive. In the first place, he is to believe almost all the same articles to be false, which the Christian believes to be true.

Now, it may easily be shewn, that it requires stronger acts of faith to believe these articles to be false, than to believe them to be true.

For, taking faith to be an assent of the mind to some proposition, of which we have no certain knowledge, it will appear that the Deist's faith is much stronger, and has more of credulity in it than the Christian's. For instance, the Christian believes the *resurrection* of the dead, because he finds it supported by such evidence and authority as cannot possibly be higher, supposing the thing was true; and he does no more violence to his reason in believing it, than in supposing that God may intend to do some things which the reason of man cannot conceive how they will be effected.

On the contrary, the *Deist* believes there



will be no resurrection. And how great is his faith ! for he pretends to no evidence or authority to support it ; it is a pure naked assent of his mind to what he does not know to be true, and of which nobody has or can give him any full assurance.

So that the difference between a *Christian* and a *Deist* does not consist in this, that the one assents to things unknown, and the other does not ; but in this, that the Christian assents to things unknown, on the account of evidence ; the other assents to things unknown, without any evidence at all.

Which shews that the *Christian* is the rational believer, and the *Deist* the blind bigot.

Ask a *Deist* or *freethinker*, why he believes Christianity to be an imposture, you must not expect to have any arguments offered you ; but however, all arguments aside, he can tell you, that the enquiry after the best religion has done *more mischief* than all other enquiries together ; that it is, at best, but a *wild-goose chase* ; he will tell you how Jesus has been called the Galilean by way of contempt ; that there are various readings in the scriptures ; that Mr Whiston is the most learned and sincere divine of the age ; that he has called the present doctrine of the Trinity an *apostacy* ; and says that the present text of the *Old Testament* is not that which was used in our

Saviour's time : he may, perhaps, crack a jest upon some text of the New Testament, and tell you how such a one used to say that *working a miracle was like shewing a trick*.

If you have strength enough to maintain your ground against such attacks as these, the *Deists* can get no power over you : but it must be confessed, that idle and foolish as these arts appear in point of reason, yet they are very fatal in their effects upon the minds of men.

Religion requires a serious and wise use of our reason, and can only recommend itself to us, when we are in a disposition to reason and think soberly ; it preserves its power over our minds no longer than whilst we consider it as the most serious, important, and sacred thing in the world.

Hence it appears why we are generally so little affected with religion, because we are seldom in a state of sober thinking. The concerns of the world keep our spirits in a constant hurry, and prevent our judging rightly of those things which are not to be judged of but by cool reason.

Every one knows that sickness, adversity, and the approach of death, are advantageous seasons for the truths of religion to affect us ; whereas they carry no other advantage than as they bring a man into such a state as disposes him to think seriously. For this reason they

who only *laugh* at religion, may be said to have used the strongest argument against it, for there is no coming at it any other way ; it is only to be attacked by little jests, lewd flings of wit, such as may betray the mind into levity, and corrupt the imagination, which so far as it is effected, so far is the power of religion lessened.

It is not the Deist's business to reason soberly, and consider the weight and moment of things with exactness ; for, to reason soberly, is to act against himself, and put his reader into that state of mind in which religion has its chief force.

But idle stories about gods and goddesses, and pagan mysteries, saucy jests, lewd inuendos, and nick-names given to serious things, serve the cause of infidelity much better than any arguments it has yet found out.

For these not only serve to confound and distract the mind, and lessen the difference of things, but they also gratify and engage the most immoral and wicked men, as they furnish them with a confutation of religion at so cheap a rate.

How many fine gentlemen must have been forced to have owned themselves Christians, had not such short confutations of Christianity been provided to their hands ! But as the cause is now managed, no one can be too dull, senseless,

or debauched, to be a powerful Deist ; a poor inflamed wretch, who never had the use of his reason in his life, may easily call religion a *Dulcinea del Tobosa*, and all who would procure any regard to it, *Saint Errants* ; and when he has done this, he may reckon himself a *great genius*, and to have shewn as much learning in favour of Deism as the first-rate infidel of the age.

How many lively *beaux* had buried their parts in swearing and obscenity, had not all jests upon Scripture been allowed as true proofs of *Deism* and politeness !

And though the *fraternity* now boasts of its numbers (as every vice if it could speak might do the same), yet, if no one was to be allowed to be a *Deist* till he had examined the truths and authority of religion, as he would examine the *title* to an estate, even the present age would be able to shew more *squarers* of the circle, or *discoverers* of the longitude, than *professors* of Deism.

Nay, was one to ask the most philosophical amongst them to shew the *great danger* of being a good Christian, or the fatal consequences of living in expectation of the *resurrection*, and *judgment* to come ; was he asked to shew the certain safety of *infidelity*, or why an infidel can be no sufferer for rejecting the offers of the gospel, he could give you as plain an answer

as if you had asked what state this *globe* of earth will be in five thousand years hence.

But indeed it seems needless to observe that prudence and common sense have no hand in infidelity. Self-murder does not more directly prove lunacy than infidelity proves the loss of reason.

There is no one that seems more to depend upon the folly and madness of his readers than you do.

You tell them that you are a *mere animal*, governed by appetites over which you have no power ; that is, you describe yourself as a *machine* that would look well in a *bridle*, and then pretend to talk of God, and providence, and religion and morality, and to pierce into the inmost nature of things and actions, with as much ease as if you was some superior form that was made up of pure wisdom and intelligence.

But the thing is, you knew what side you had chosen, and that if you was not wanting in impiety, lewdness, and reproaches upon virtue, you might abound in nonsense as much as you pleased.

And indeed it must be confessed, that as hardly any authority is sufficient to recommend a person that comes from God to do us good ; so is there scarce any folly great enough to expose another that comes a missionary from the kingdom of darkness to do us harm.



## SECTION IV.

You are at last so sensible of the abilities which you have discovered in laying open the mysteries of human nature, that you think it but a necessary piece of civility to make an apology to the world for shewing such a superior knowledge. Thus say you :

*What hurt do I do to man, if I make him more known to himself than he was before ?*

*But we are so desperately in love with flattery, that we can never relish a truth that is mortifying.*

To prove the justice of this remark, you say, *I do not believe the immortality of the soul would even have found so general a reception in human capacities as it has, had it not been a pleasing one, that extolled and was a compliment to the whole species*<sup>1</sup>.

This remark supposes that the *mortality* of the soul is a *truth*, for you make our not believing it to be mortal a proof that we cannot relish a truth that is mortifying. You also impute our opinion of the soul's immortality to a *desperate love of flattery*, which is giving it as sure a mark of an error as you could well have thought of.

The reasonableness of this remark is founded upon that advantage and dignity which arise

<sup>1</sup> p. 256.

from immortality ; this is what induces you to think that its reception in human capacities is owing to a love of flattery.

You might have made the same remark upon the *belief* of the *being* and providence of God, that they had never had so general a reception in human capacities, were not men desperately *in love with flattery, and not able to relish a truth that is mortifying.*

For the *being* and *providence* of God are the most pleasing *truths*, and more extol and elevate man's nature and condition than anything else ; and whilst we assert the providence of God, we assert our own happiness, as being the care and concern of so great and glorious a nature.

But how ought that man to be treated who should bring the *belief* of a divine being as an instance of the power of flattery over human nature, or allege the doctrine of providence as a proof that we cannot relish a truth that is mortifying ?

Yet this would be as well as to instance, as you have done, in the immortality of the soul. For it is as reasonable to rejoice in the immortality of our souls, as in the being of God ; and it is as impious to say that we hold its immortality, because we cannot relish a truth that is mortifying, as to say that we believe the providence of God for the same reason.

What an aversion must you have to the force of this principle, that when you was to shew that we cannot relish a *truth* that is mortifying, you could like no instance so well as the general disbelief of the soul's mortality? Can it be supposed that you would have instanced in this opinion, if you had not wished that it should lose its force upon men's minds, and be no longer considered as the corner stone of religion, but as a *notion* founded in the falseness, pride, and flattery of man's nature?

Was any one ever so angry at the Macedonian hero's vanity of being a god? need he have reproached him more than by imputing it to a *desperate love of flattery*?

Yet this is the tender method in which you have chose to expose the belief of the soul's immortality as owing to a desperate love of flattery.

You will perhaps say, *Have I denied the soul's immortality?*

In express terms you have not denied it; such a flat denial would have signified much less than what you have said.

You knew very well that to impute the belief of it to falseness and flattery, was the best way of denying it.

It is rejected here in a manner that highly suits the temper of irreligion, by being considered not only as false, but as arising from the basest

qualities of human nature, *pride* and a *desperate* love of *flattery*.

These things serve not only to raise a disbelief, but to excite an indignation against a principle owing to such reproachful causes; and, what is still a greater point gained, they teach people to look with contempt and dislike on those persons and that religion which teach such a principle.

Our blessed Saviour saith, *I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me shall never die.*

Now, according to your philosophy, this speech of our Saviour's must be reckoned an artful application to the weakness and vanity of human nature, an address to the blind side of man to increase his love of flattery, and keep him from a true knowledge of himself.

For if man believes the immortality of his soul, through a desperate love of flattery, certainly he who comes to encourage and establish such a belief, comes to encourage and establish that immoderate love of flattery.

Nay, this doctrine of yours not only serves to expose the opinion of the immortality of the soul, and reproaches the Christian religion which teaches it, but it prepares a man to be proof against all doctrines of religion that have any happiness in them; for whatever is believed or practised that tends any way to raise or exalt

the condition of man, is equally subject to this reproach, that it is *received* through an excessive fondness of flattery.

So that your wise philosophy comes to this, that if there was no honour or happiness in religion, no greatness to be acquired by our obeying God, it could not be charged upon our pride and vanity ; but since religion is in order to happiness, and since our worshipping of God implies our having a great and glorious friend and benefactor, such a religion may be owing to a vice of our nature, a *desperate love of flattery*.

And the same may be said of every virtuous action, that it is practised through a desperate love of flattery, inasmuch as virtue is supposed to make us friends and favourites of God, and so dignifies and exalts our state.

Nay, this way of arguing proves, that the greater and more glorious the idea is which we form of God, the more we may be influenced by an ill motive ; for the greater and more glorious we represent the nature of God, the more we raise and dignify ourselves, who are related to so great a being, and are in covenant with him.

So that to clear ourselves of a desperate love of flattery, and to shew that we can relish truths that are mortifying, we should conceive very low and mean notions of God, and such as



would make it neither our honour nor happiness to worship him.

Such a religion as this, that had nothing in it worthy of God or men, might, according to your account, be owing to some rational principle, and not capable of being imputed to the pride or vanity of man's nature.

For since you impute the belief of the soul's immortality to a desperate love of flattery, because such belief sets us out to great advantage, and adds dignity to our nature, the same imputation is equally chargeable upon every doctrine or practice that promises any happiness or honour to us ; and no religion or opinions can be free from that charge but such as are of no benefit or advantage to us.

From this therefore we may believe, that had we a religion which proposed nothing worthy of God, or beneficial to man, the Deists and wits of your size would all of them turn *priests*, and devoutly wait at its *altars*.

To speak now a word or two concerning *pride*.

*Pride* is an error or a vice, as *covetousness* is a vice ; it is a notable desire, ill directed : it is a right desire earnestly to desire happiness, but that desire is sinful when it is wholly set upon *gold*, or any other *false* good.

So a desire of greatness is an excellent desire, a right turn of mind ; but when it fixes

*ambition.*

upon a false honour, it is a vicious irregularity. To desire the highest exaltation of which our nature is capable, is as right a disposition as to desire to be as like to God as we can.

Now, had you said that the belief of the soul's immortality was assisted and strengthened in us through a desire of greatness, you had said as reasonable a thing as to say, that Christianity makes a stronger impression upon the minds of men through a desire of happiness.

For had we not these dispositions, neither religion, nor anything else that was of any advantage to us, could take any hold of us: for what would the happiness or greatness of any proposal signify to beings whose natures were not affected with them?

Now, to say that religion is better received through this tendency of our nature, is no more a reproach, than it is to say that our understanding and reason recommend religion to us.

For these dispositions or inclinations constitute the excellence of our nature, and give us all the dignity that we have: it being as right a judgment of the mind, to desire to be as like to God as our natures will allow, as it is to prefer truth to falsehood.

But to impute our belief of the immortality of the soul to *pride*, is as ridiculous as to impute our desire of eternal happiness to *avarice*.

For *pride*, considered as a vice, is no more

the cause of our approbation of immortality, than *avarice* is the cause of our setting our affection on things above.

Pride is as earthly and down-looking a vice as covetousness, and as truly sinks the soul into a state of meanness.

A delight in false honour as much debases and hinders the mind from aspiring after its true greatness, as a fondness for empty riches keeps the soul averse from the approbation of her true good. That this is the effect of pride, that it debases the mind, and makes it unable to relish its true greatness; that it unfits it for the reception of doctrines which exalt and raise our nature, may be also learnt from him who came to lead us unto all truth.

Speaking of vain-glorious men, says our blessed Saviour, *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not that honour which cometh from God alone?*<sup>1</sup>

But you make the pride of man the cause of his believing divine truths, though they are as opposite to one another as avarice and heavenly-mindedness, light and darkness.

To make some apology for yourself, you say, *What hurt do I do to a man, if I make him more known to himself than he was before?*

You should have put the question thus:

<sup>1</sup> St John v. 44.

What hurt do I do to a man, if I make him more vicious than he was before, if I deprave his understanding, and lead him into a contempt and dislike of the strongest principles of religion?

For if there is any danger, either to yourself or others, in corrupting their minds, and destroying the motives to religion and virtue, you are capable of no other apology but what that being may make *who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*.

The *arrow that flieth by day*, and the *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, are mere blessings, if compared to the man who infuses vicious opinions into the mind, which weakens the power of religion, and make men less devoted to the worship and service of God.

How can you say that you have only made man more known to himself, by teaching him that the general belief of the soul's immortality is owing to a desperate love of flattery?

Have you proved that he does not know himself, if he thinks it is owing to any other cause? Have you so much as attempted to shew that it can have no other foundation? that it is not founded in reason, religion, and the attributes of God?

But proving (I recollect) is no talent of yours; and if you may be allowed to *shine* in anything, it is in loose insinuations, positive assertions, and vain conjectures.

## SECTION V.

You come now to give us a taste of your skill in *phraseology*, or the force and propriety of words. All sorts of learning seem to be at your service, and you are so constant to yourself as to make them all conspire in one and the same design against religion.

*Hope*, being a word of great consolation in the Christian religion, you have pitched upon that as most deserving the kind assistance of your learned hand.

*All hope, say you, includes doubt ; a silver inkhorn may pass in speech, because every body knows what we mean by it, but a certain hope cannot. The epithet destroys the essence of the substantive ; it is palpable nonsense. The reason therefore why it is not so shocking to some, to hear a man speak of certain hope, as if he should talk of hot ice, or liquid oak, is not because there is less nonsense contained in the first than in either of the latter, but because the word hope, I mean the essence of it, is not so clearly understood by the generality of the people, as the words and essences of ice and oak are*<sup>1</sup>.

What a triumph is here over religion ! and with how much ease do you reject an article of faith with a *noun substantive* !

<sup>1</sup> p. 149.



In our *burial* service we have these words, *In sure and certain hope of a resurrection, &c.*

This it seems cannot pass in speech, without the destruction of a *substantive*; it is *shocking, and palpable nonsense.*

Let it first be observed, that *hope* implies the *belief, dependence, or expectation* of something that shall come to pass. Now I should think that a thing may as well be expected with certainty, as uncertainty; and that its being certain to happen, is no inconsistency in the expression. It can hardly be denied but that a man may be certain that some things will never happen; and where is the contradiction of supposing him as certain that some things will happen?

But to come to your own arguments.

*All hope, say you, includes doubt.* This as much contradicts my understanding as if you had said that *all trust* includes *diffidence*; and I cannot trust a man, unless I distrust him. The apostle says, *by hope we are saved*; according to you, he must mean, *by doubting* we are saved; for if *hope* necessarily includes *doubting*, and *hope* be necessary to salvation, it evidently follows, that *doubting* is necessary to salvation; and every exhortation to *hope* in God, is an exhortation to *doubt* of God.

Our blessed Saviour said, *If ye have faith, and doubt not, &c.* Now had you been present

at this saying, you could have shewn the impossibility of what he exhorted them to; that *faith* or *hope* implied *doubting*; and that to talk of *certain hope* or *faith*, was as shocking to a fine understanding as to talk of *hot ice* or *liquid oak*.

*Certain hope*, you say, is *palpable nonsense*, because the *epithet* destroys the essence of the *substantive*.

So that *doubting* is the essence of *hope*, and consequently whatever else belongs to hope is only *accidental*; the essence of hope is *doubting*.

Now if *doubting* is the essence of *hope*, then where there is the most *doubting* there must be the most of *hope*; for where there is most of the essence of a thing, there must necessarily be most of the thing itself.

Now it seems to me as ridiculous to make *doubting* the essence of *hope*, as to make *fear* the essence of *courage*. For hope, so far as it goes, as much excludes *doubting* as *courage*, so far as it extends, banishes *fear*. There may be a weak hope which is mixed with doubt, as there may be a half *courage* that is attended with *fear*; but a thorough hope as truly rejects doubt, as a perfect *courage* shakes off all *fear*. And it is just such *shocking nonsense* to talk of a *certain hope* as to speak of a *fearless courage*: and there is just as much murder of the *substantive* in one case as the other.

*gentle*

Hope, or expectation, does not imply *uncertainty*, but *futurity*, that the things expected are not in being, but are to come to pass; this is all that is of the essence of hope; it is only the *futurity* of things that makes it.

Let the things come to pass, and the hope ceases, this is the only way of destroying it. But whether the things to come be with certainty or uncertainty expected, no more destroys that disposition of mind, which is called hope, than the passion of *fear* is destroyed by exerting itself reasonably or unreasonably.

Hope is uncertain, not because we cannot hope or expect with certainty, but because the things we hope for are generally not in our power, so as we can be secure of the event.

But you ridiculously suppose, that hope, or expectation, as a faculty of the mind necessarily includes uncertainty, as if a man cannot expect or hope for that which he is sure will answer his expectation; or that he must cease to expect things, because he has certain grounds to expect them. These are the absurdities which you plunge into, rather than allow a *certain* hope of the *resurrection* of the dead.

Hope is as the things hoped for. In uncertain things it is uncertain. But if God is pleased to inform us of things to come, we are with *certain hope* and expectation to depend upon them.

Agreeable to this, St Paul says, *In hope of*

*eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.*

Here we have an apostle's authority for a *certain hope*, made as undeniable as the veracity of God.

But this must be very shocking to a gentleman of your refined understanding, and must give you a further uneasiness, to behold the destruction of a whole noun *substantive* to establish only an article of religion.

You compare *certain hope* to *hot ice*, or *liquid oak*, and say, that the expressions would be equally *shocking* were the nature of *hope* as well understood as the nature of *ice* and *oak*.

Had you not been used to understand every thing wrong, you had never made this observation; for the contrary to this happens to be true, that the expression is not so shocking in one case as the other, because the nature of hope is as well understood as that of *ice*, &c.

It is not shocking to say *certain hope*, because hope is known to be founded upon some degrees of assurance.

But does *ice* suppose some degrees of heat in order to its existence? Is *ice* hotter or colder, as hope is more or less assured? Hope is stronger and better the *more* it has of assurance, and the *less* it is opposed with doubts; but is *ice* the stronger and harder the *more* it

has of heat, or the *less* it is surrounded with cold?

Your comparison also of *certain hope* to *liquid oak* is equally ingenious and worthy of yourself; for it supposes that an *oak* changes from *solid* to *liquid*, as *hope* fluctuates from *doubts* to *belief*. For were not an *oak* as various in its nature, as to *liquid* and *solid*, as *hope* is various in its nature, as to *doubt* and *assurance*, it must be *shocking* nonsense to make a *liquid oak* the same thing as an *assured hope*.

I have been the longer upon this point, because it is levelled at the very foundation of our religion, and would teach people to doubt of its greatest articles, through the mere force of a word or two, and for the sake of a noun *substantive*.

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## SECTION VI.

I HAD now taken my leave of you, if the letter you published in the *London Journal*, in defence of your book, had not been just put into my hands.

Having seen your talent at apology, I expected no great matter from you in that way; but, however, I am now convinced that your



book gives us but a small essay of your abilities, and that you can exceed it as much as you please.

For who would imagine that the author of so poor a rhapsody could produce such masterly strokes as these in the defence of it?

“*My vanity,*” say you, “*I never could conquer so well as I could wish, and I am too proud to commit crimes.*”

Surely no one after this will venture to lay any thing to your charge, since great must be your innocence if pride be the guardian of it.

But if any one should chance to humble you, you must then fall into a defenceless state. But if you are not to be proved guilty till you can be shewn to be deficient in pride, it may require some time to effect it.

Since you ground your vindication so much upon your pride, it may not be amiss to recollect the definition you have given us of it in your own book. *Pride*, say you, *is that natural faculty by which every mortal that has any understanding overvalues and imagines better things of himself than any impartial judge, thoroughly acquainted with all his qualities and circumstances, would allow him*<sup>1</sup>.

A pretty qualification indeed for a man to found his innocence upon! Yet you (with a

<sup>1</sup> p. 125.

more than ordinary brightness) own that you are governed by this *vice*, to prove yourself to be *faultless*.

Should a *blind* man, who had lost his way, allege his *blindness* as a proof that he could not lose it, he would shew that he was just as well acquainted with the advantages of blindness as you are with the effects of pride.

The next ingenious step that you take is this : *The Fable of the Bees*, say you, *was designed for the entertainment of people of knowledge and education*. It is a *book of severe and exalted morality, that contains a strict test of virtue*.

Had you said that the author was a *seraphim*, and that he never was any nearer the earth than the fixed stars, I should have thought you in as sober a way as you now appear to be in.

That you intended it for the entertainment of *people of knowledge and education*, is what I cannot say is false ; for if your pride is such as you assert, you may be capable of intending anything ; I know of nothing too monstrous for you to go about.

But if you can believe that you have wrote a book of *severe and exalted morality*, you must not laugh at those who believed *stocks* and *stones* to be objects of worship, or took a *leek* or an *onion* to be a *deity*.

You are happy in this, that you have made an assertion which an adversary cannot further expose, because there is no superior degree of extravagance to which it can be compared.

For if a person will write a book to prove that man is a *mere animal*, and that *moral virtue* is the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride, and then call it a book of *severe and exalted morality*, he has this satisfaction, that no skill can aggravate his nonsense.

*Such as it is, you say, you are satisfied it has diverted persons of great probity and virtue.*

Pray, sir, how does this appear? Where do you find these people of *great virtue*? When you wrote your book you knew of no such people. Virtue was then nowhere to be found; for you tell us, that having in vain sought for it in the world, you at last went to the *convents*, but even there it had no existence. But now, it seems, rather than want an apology, you will suppose even what confutes your book, and what you most hate, that there is such a being as a man of *great virtue*.

*I lay it down, you add, as a first principle, that in all societies, great or small, it is the duty of every member of it to be good; that virtue ought to be encouraged, vice discountenanced, the laws obeyed, and the transgressors punished; and then you say there is not a*

*line in the whole book that contradicts this doctrine.*

This comes so oddly from you, that it need not be exposed to the reader ; if you had intended it as a *public recantation* of all that you had delivered before, there had been something in it ; but to say that *there is not a line in your book that contradicts this*, is trusting too much to the weakness of your readers : for, can you pretend to have a *first principle*, or to talk of *duty* or *virtue*, after you have declared that the *moral virtues* are all a cheat, by making them the *political offspring which flattery begot upon pride* ?

Can you recommend *goodness*, who have compared the *pulchrum* and *honestum* in actions to the whimsical distinctions of *flowers*, and made the difference between good and evil as fanciful as the difference between a *tulip* and an *auricula*.

When therefore you pretend to *lay it down as a first principle, that it is the duty of every man to be good, &c.* : it amounts to as much as if you had said, having shewn that there is nothing but fancy in the preference of flowers, *I lay it down as a first principle, that it is the duty of every man to admire the tulip above all other flowers ; that the love of tulips ought to be encouraged, and that of auriculas discountenanced, &c.*

But however, lest any of your readers should imagine that you meant something more than this, and to clear yourself from all suspicion of gravity or seriousness in your recommendation of *virtue* and *goodness*, you immediately add this explication of yourself.

*Would you banish fraud and luxury, prevent profaneness and irreligion, and make the generality of the people charitable, good, and virtuous; break down the printing-presses, melt the founts, and burn all the books in the island; knock down foreign trade, prohibit all commerce with strangers, and permit no ships to go to sea; restore to the clergy, the king, and the barons, their ancient privileges, prerogatives, and possessions; build new churches, and convert all the coin you can come at into sacred utensils; erect monasteries and almshouses in abundance, and let no parish be without a charity-school; let the clergy preach abstinence and self-denial to others, and take what liberty they please for themselves; let no man be made lord treasurer but a bishop. By such pious endeavours and wholesome regulations the scene would soon be altered. Such a change would influence the manners of the nation, and render them temperate, honest, and sincere; and from the next generation we might reasonably expect a harmless, innocent, and well-meaning people, that*



would never dispute the doctrine of passive obedience, nor any other orthodox principles, but be submissive to superiors, and unanimous in religious worship<sup>1</sup>.

It must be owned that you never so much exceeded yourself as in this flight of your oratory. And had your teeming imagination been able to have produced one more evil or folly, it had been added to the lovely idea you have formed of a people intending to live like Christians.

He that can now suspect you guilty of one sober thought in relation to religion or morality, must be acknowledged to be very senseless.

For, mention your regard to religion or virtue as often as you please, you have here taken care to assure us, that you wish their prosperity as *heartily* as you wish to see the kingdom full of *monasteries*, and all our money converted into *sacred utensils*.

But I beg pardon for supposing that what you have so clearly said to shew your abhorrence of religion, and contempt of virtue, needs any illustration.

But to carry on the *banter*, you still add, "*If I have shewn the way to worldly greatness, I have always without hesitation preferred the road that leads to virtue.*"

Had there been one instance of this kind

<sup>1</sup> p. 253.

in your book, I suppose you would have referred us to it. But enough has been already observed to shew what virtue implies in your system. I shall however produce one passage to shew how you *always, and without hesitation, prefer the road that leads to virtue.*

Speaking of *lust*, you say, “The *artful moralists* have taught us cheerfully to subdue it.” And then you cry out, “*Oh! the mighty prize we have in view for all our self-denial! Can any man be so serious as to abstain from laughter, when he considers that for so much deceit and insincerity practised upon ourselves as well as others, we have no other recompence than the vain satisfaction of making our species appear more exalted, and remote from that of other animals than it really is, and we in our own consciences know it to be<sup>2</sup>.*”

Thus it is that *without hesitation* you give your approbation of virtue; you make the moderation of our passions to be even a sin against our *own consciences*, as acting *deceitfully*, contrary to what we know becomes us.

You make *self-denial*, or any restraints which distinguish us from brutes, to be so ridiculous a thing as ought to excite the laughter and contempt of every creature.

Thus is your prostitute pen wantonly employed to put out, as far as you can, the light

<sup>2</sup> p. 157.

of reason and religion, and deliver up mankind to sensuality and vileness.

Should I now lament the miserable fruits of *free-thinking*, which thus tend not only to set us loose from the regards of religion, but to destroy whatever is reasonable, decent, or comely in human nature, though as a friend of religion I might be censured by *some*, yet surely as an advocate for the dignity of man I might be pardoned by *all*.

But it is our peculiar unhappiness as clergymen, that if we sit loose to the duties of religion, we are doubly reproached, and if we firmly assert its doctrines, we fall under as great condemnation.

In all other causes a man is better received, because it is his proper business to appear, yet that which should recommend our pleading, happens to make them less regarded; we are worse heard because God has made it our duty to speak.

But I wave this topic; for if, when we assert the common doctrines of Christianity, we are thought too much interested, we shall hardly be reckoned less selfish when we plead for common equity towards ourselves.

You have therefore picked out a right body of men to ridicule, and your manner of doing it shews you knew that no want of wit would make you less successful.

We often suffer from *porters* and *carmen*, who venture to be smart upon us, through an assurance, that we must lose by replying. A security like this has encouraged you to be very liberal of your mirth, and such mirth as might pass for *dulness* upon any other subject.

I will not say how infinite your wit has been upon our dress and habit, or what uncommon *vivacity* you have shewn upon the *beaver* hat, whether new or old.

Had you spared our *majestic gait*, *slick faces kept constantly shaved*, *handsome nails diligently pared*, and *linen transparently curious*<sup>1</sup>, nothing of the *sublime* had been found in your book. It must be confessed this is a heavy charge against the *priesthood*; but we may see you was loth to enhance it, or you might have mentioned the *black eyes*, the *high foreheads*, and the *dimpled chins*, which may be proved upon several of them, which they shew in the face of the world at noon-day.

But since I have charged you with *wit*, I do not think it fair to leave you under so gross an accusation without something to support your spirits. Read therefore the following words of the most excellent Bruyere.

*Have the libertines*, says he, *who value themselves so much upon the title of wits, have*

<sup>1</sup> p. 135.

*they wit enough to perceive that they are only called so by irony?*

You can hardly relish anything of mine, after this taste of so fine a writer, I shall therefore trouble you but little further.

If you wonder that I have taken no notice of the dreadful evils you charge upon *charity-schools*, and the sad effects which such *catechizing-houses* must have upon a kingdom that is both *Christian* and *Protestant*, I must tell you that I purposely avoided it. Some things are so plain that it is yielding too much to offer to defend them.

Christians, I hope, will have so much common sense as to know that no Christian can call such houses an evil; and as to complaints from other hands, who would not wish that the enemies of Christianity may have every day more reason to complain?

As to your part, they will observe, that in these very writings, where you complain of the evil of *charity-schools*, you make *moral virtue* a cheat, the *offspring* of *pride*, and the enquiry after the *best religion*, but a *wild-goose chase*. A very worthy person indeed to talk of either *good* or *evil*!

Whilst we can preserve but the very name of religion, a charitable contribution to educate children in it must be reckoned amongst our best works.



*Charity-schools* can never need a defence in a kingdom that boasts of having the scriptures in the *vulgar tongue*. For if it be our glory and happiness to have the Bible in *English*, surely it must be in some degree glorious to teach our *natives* how to read it.

You say, if any one can shew the *least tittle of blasphemy* or *profaneness* in your book, or *anything tending to immorality*, or a *corruption of manners*, you will burn it yourself, at any time or place your adversary shall appoint. I appoint the first time, and the most public place, and if you keep your word shall be your humble servant.

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## POSTSCRIPT.

HAVING in my second section mentioned Mr Bayle as the principal author amongst those whose parts have been employed to arraign and expose virtue and religion, as being only the blind effects of *complexion*, natural *temper*, and *custom*, &c. ; it may not be improper to recommend to his admirers the following instances of that gentleman's great *penetration* and *clearness* on this subject.

Mr Bayle engaged in a cause where he found it necessary to assert, that a *society of*

*Atheists* might be as virtuous men as a society of other people professing religion ; and to maintain this opinion, he was farther obliged to declare, that religious *opinions* and *beliefs* had no influence *at all* upon men's actions.

This step was very necessary to be taken ; for if religious *opinions* or *beliefs* were allowed to have *any* influence upon our actions, then it must also have been allowed, that a *society of Atheists* must have been less virtuous than a society of people holding religious opinions.

Mr Bayle therefore roundly denied that religious opinions have any influence upon us, and set himself to prove that *complexion*, natural *temper*, *custom*, &c. are the *only* causes of our actions.

Thus he says he *is persuaded that man is that kind of creature who, with all his boasted reason, never acts by the principles of his belief*<sup>1</sup>. Again, *it cannot be denied that man acts continually against principles*. And again, *I pretend to have demonstrated that men never act by principle*.

Mr Bayle has often diverted himself with the unreasonableness of those *divines* who first declare the sublimity and inconceivableness of the Christian mysteries, and then pretend to explain them. But they may laugh at him in their turn, who happens to be as weak and unreasonable even in his *philosophic chair*.

<sup>1</sup> Miscel. Reflect.

For he can give it you out as an undeniable maxim, *that the mind of man, being subject to infinite caprice and variety, no rule can be laid down concerning it not liable to a thousand objections*<sup>2</sup>; and then tell you *he has demonstrated that man never acts by principle*. As if he had said, I give you here a *certain and infallible rule* concerning the mind of man, not liable to *one* objection; though I assure you *that no rule can be laid down not liable to a thousand objections*.

Mr Bayle, to shew that his *society of Atheists* might be as virtuous as other men, affirms, that a *wicked inclination neither arises from our ignorance of God's existence, nor is checked by the knowledge of a Supreme Judge who punishes and rewards*. And that an *inclination to evil belongs no more to a heart void of the sense of God, than one possessed with it, and that one is under no looser a rein than the other*<sup>3</sup>.

With how much *reason and freedom* of mind Mr Bayle asserts this may be seen from what he says in other places. Thus, in his *Historical Dictionary* he can tell you, *that there is nothing so advantageous to man, if we consider either the mind or the heart, as to know God rightly*<sup>4</sup>.

He can commend the saying of Silius Itali-

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 294.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. iv. p. 2683.

cus, as very *pertinently* spoken of the *Carthaginians*:—*Alas, miserable mortals! your ignorance of the Divine nature is the original cause of your crimes. Again, I will not deny there have been pagans, who, making the utmost use of their notion of the Divine nature, have rendered it the means of abating the violence of their passions*<sup>1</sup>.

These contradictions need no illustration; I shall pass on to shew you a few more of the same kind.

Mr Bayle affirms, *that man never acts by the principles of his belief*. Yet see how often he teaches the contrary. Speaking of the stange opinions and practices of some *pagans, who, though persuaded of a providence, denied nothing to their lusts and passions*; he gives this as the reason of their conduct, *Either that they must suppose the gods approved these ways, or else that one need not trouble one's self whether they did or no*<sup>2</sup>.

See here this elevated free-thinker asserting that *man never acts by his belief*, and yet making it *necessary* that the *pagans* must have had *such or such a belief*, or else they could never have acted as they did.

Instances of this kind are very numerous. In the article of the Sadducees, he says, *The good life of the Sadducees might have been an*

<sup>1</sup> Miscel. Reflect. p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 404.

*effect of their believing a providence. Again, the orthodox will feel the activity of that impression as well as the Sadducees, and being moreover persuaded of a future state, religion will have a greater influence upon their lives*<sup>3</sup>.

Here a *belief* of a providence in this world is allowed to be the cause of a *good life*, and a *persuasion* of a future state affirmed to have a still *greater influence* upon our lives; and yet the same *great reasoner demonstrates* that men always act without any regard to their *beliefs* or *persuasions*.

To demonstrate that *beliefs* and *opinions* have no part in the forming our lives, Mr Bayle appeals to the lives of Christians; “For, *were it otherwise,*” says he, “*how is it possible that Christians, so clearly instructed from revelation supported by so many miracles, that they must renounce their sins in order to be eternally happy, and to prevent eternal misery, should yet live as they do, in the most enormous ways of sin and disobedience?*”

This is Mr Bayle’s invincible demonstration, that *beliefs* and *persuasions* have no effect upon us, and that man *never* acts by principle; though you shall see that he can as well demonstrate the contrary to this.

In the article of *Sommona-codom*, speaking of this doctrine, *viz. That an old sinner who*

<sup>3</sup> Hist. Dict.



*has enjoyed all the pleasures of life will be eternally happy, provided he truly repents on his death-bed; he makes this remark, Doubtless this may be the reason why the fear of God's judgments, or the hopes of his rewards, make no great impressions upon worldly people*<sup>1</sup>.

Here you see this learned philosopher urges the lives of Christians as a *demonstration* that men never act by *persuasion*; and yet tells you as a thing *past all doubt*, that they live as they do through a *persuasion* that a death-bed repentance will set all right.

Take another instance of the same kind. Religion and principle have no effect upon us: *This must be the case*, says Mr Bayle, "*or the ancient pagans, who were under the yoke of numberless superstitions, continually employed in appeasing the anger of their idols, awed by infinite prodigies, and firmly persuaded the gods dispensed good or evil according to the life they led, had been restrained from all the abominable crimes they committed*"<sup>2</sup>."

This paragraph is to shew that religious *persuasions* have no effect upon us; because if they had, the *persuasions* of the pagans must have made them good men.

But Mr Bayle here forgets that he himself

<sup>1</sup> Hist. Dict.

<sup>2</sup> Miscel. Reflect. p. 275.

has affirmed that the *pagan religion* not only taught ridiculous things, but that it was besides a religion authorizing the most abominable crimes<sup>3</sup>; that they were led to their crimes by their very religion; that it must have been a point of faith with them, that to make themselves imitators of God, they ought to be cheats, envious, fornicators, adulterers.

So that this philosopher shews, with great consistency, that the *religion* of the *pagans* engaged them in *abominable crimes*, and that the *pagans* did not act by their religion, because they were guilty of *abominable crimes*.

But I proceed no further at present; this specimen of Mr Bayle's absurdities and *contradictions* on this very article, where he has been most admired, may suffice to shew that if he has gained upon men's minds, it has been by other arts than those of clear reasoning. I would not by this insinuate that he was not a man of fine parts; Bellarmin's absurdities, though ever so many, still leave room to acknowledge his great abilities. This seems to have been Mr Bayle's case; he was no *jésuit* or *papist*, but he was as great a *zealot* in his way. Bellarmin contradicted himself for the sake of *mother church*; and Mr Bayle contradicted himself as heartily for the sake of an *imaginary society*, a *society of Atheists*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 390.

I have inserted these few contradictory passages for the sake of such as are proselytes to Mr Bayle's philosophy; let them here see, that in following him they only leave religion to follow *blindness* and *bigotry* in systems of profaneness.

When *clergymen* contradict one another, though it be but upon a ceremony of religion, *infidels* make great advantage of it; for irreligion, having no arguments of its own, is forced to catch at every foreign objection.

But Mr Bayle's *self-contradictions* upon the chief article of his philosophy may perhaps not lessen his authority with our men of *reason*.

For whether our *freethinkers* are not such *bigots* as to adore Mr Bayle's *contradictions* is what I will not presume to say.

I will promise for nothing but their little minds and blind zeal to have a share in every error that can give offence to well-minded men.

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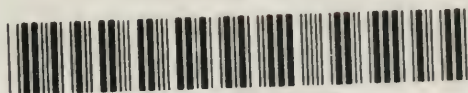
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